Asia-Pacific Journal of Innovation in Hospitality and Tourism
APJIHT

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The aim of the journal is to promote and enhance research development and innovation in the field of hospitality and tourism. The journal seeks to provide an international platform for hospitality and tourism educators, postgraduate student and researchers, to debate and disseminate research findings, facilitate the discussion of new research areas and techniques, and highlight best practices for industry practitioners. The articles published in the journal take a multi-disciplinary and inter-disciplinary approach to study the marketing, finance, economics and social aspects of hospitality and tourism. Papers dealing with theoretical, conceptual and empirical aspects of the subject matter will be considered for publication.

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• Applied research
• Empirical research
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• Management styles
• Methods and principles
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Paper Contributors
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Guiding Students Towards Africa: Choices of Destination in Assessments

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Abstract: As Japan is a significant provider of investment and foreign aid to Africa (Watanabe, 2008), Japanese perceptions of Africa are important (Philips, 2001). However, undergraduate courses often ignore or gloss over African destinations and students tend to avoid engaging with them, leaving stereotypical views and the possibility of racial profiling unchallenged (Agyeman, 2015). In order to investigate how students engage with African destinations, this article reports on destination choices in assessments for 79 tourism and hospitality students, and the results obtained from 12 in-depth follow-up interviews that focused on the reasons for those choices. The findings indicate that restricting student choice during assessments and using different assessment types increases engagement with African destinations and issues. By encouraging students to engage with Africa and to view the continent in a reflective manner, educators can help revise negative views and develop more balanced opinions.

Keywords: Africa, assessment, student choice, tourism and hospitality education


Introduction

Japan has an important position in international affairs and is a source of significant investment and foreign aid to Africa (Watanabe, 2008). As such, Japanese perceptions of Africa are important to Africans, Africanists, and the wider field of African studies (Philips, 2001). The limited knowledge of general issues and current development in African tourism, and the stereotypically negative viewpoints that are often held towards the continent and its people (Agyeman, 2015; Richard, 2011) are therefore both surprising and disconcerting, especially by students in tourism and hospitality departments at Japanese universities.
In Japan, there are a number of notable and well-respected research centres and organisations, such as Japan Association for African Studies (JAAS) and Institute for Developing Economies, which are active in diverse disciplines ranging from natural sciences to economics and political science. In the higher education sector, there are important centres of Africanist activity, but the increase in African studies at some universities and the development of research in some disciplines is often offset by the decline of participation in others, leading to change, but not necessarily growth (Philips, 2001). This is in contrast to the more sustained augmentation in Middle Eastern and Central Asian studies over the last two decades (Komatsu, 2005; Rakhimov, 2014).

While research centres and organisations publish and distribute their findings as widely as possible, for a greater awareness of African issues and research to be fostered, a broader dissemination of information across a large range of universities in Japan is needed. For Japan to continue playing an important role in world affairs, to successfully host and accommodate visitors from around the world at the 2020 Olympics, and to help support the promotion of ‘multicultural coexistence’ (tabunka kyōsei) outlined in a 2006 Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications (MIC) report, the current generation of students at Japanese universities needs to be able to engage with research and course content that encourages the questioning of stereotypically negative attitudes and does not gloss over the African continent.

Despite enduring claims that government ministries and educational institutions in Japan are attempting to restrict intellectual engagement with the outside world (Hall, 1998), researchers and lecturers working in Japan do have the opportunity to try and increase students’ awareness of African countries and cultures, and to dispel negative images and associations that may be held. It is posited that by providing students with the opportunity to study destinations and issues in Africa and then challenging them to engage with these destinations in various contexts, including assessments, university educators can increase exposure to, and understanding of, issues in Africa.

This paper aims to identify a way of encouraging student engagement with African destinations and issues by reporting on students’ choices during different types of assessments for three English for Tourism and Hospitality classes at a university in the Kanto region of Japan. The assessment types reported on are individual written projects, individual presentations, group presentations, and group conversations. For the projects and presentations, students were given a free choice of destination, but for the conversation assessments, the choice was limited to the destinations covered in class during the course. Both individual and group presentations were conducted in front of the students’ peers, whereas the group conversations were conducted in front of the assessor only.
The following hypotheses will be tested:

1. H0: Limiting student choice of destinations will not increase engagement with African destinations in assessments.

   H1: Limiting student choice of destinations will increase engagement with African destinations in assessments.

2. H0: Students will not engage with African destinations more during group assessments than in individual assessments.

   H1: Students will engage with African destinations more during group assessments than in individual assessments.

3. H0: Students will not engage with African destinations less during presentation-style assessments than during other assessment formats.

   H1: Students will engage with African destinations less during presentation-style assessments than during other assessment formats.

**Literature Review**

In English for Tourism and Hospitality courses, the focus on communicative competence (Canale & Swain, 1980) and intercultural communication (Alred, Byram & Fleming, 2003) is especially pertinent (Bury, 2014). Consequently, undergraduate tourism courses at Japanese universities often focus on developing both communicative and vocational skills (Busby, 2001). However, learners face many challenges when dealing with the processes of communication, such as interpreting differences in cultures and constructing meaningful messages in the target language. Thus, developing students’ abilities in these areas must also be emphasised (Buttjes & Byram, 1991).

It is also important for educators to encourage students to develop appropriate and reflective attitudes (Litteljohn & Watson, 2004). Students are constantly being challenged in relation to their comprehension of, and beliefs about, the target language and culture (Risager, 2006) as well as their perceptions of their own abilities and levels of confidence, and courses should reflect this. By incorporating more liberal aspects of tourism and hospitality education into courses, educators can help develop students’ reflective capabilities and awareness of social issues and responsibilities (Inui, Wheeler & Lankford, 2006). This can be achieved by introducing destinations and issues from developing nations alongside more traditional themes and locations. Furthermore, including task-based activities, such as projects and presentations, into classroom activities and assessments will help encourage students to engage further with social issues and responsibilities.

Projects and presentations can aid the effective development of students’ communicative competencies in conjunction with more general cognitive strategies, and therefore, are more valuable to students and their learning goals than traditional rote learning styles (Ribé & Vidal, 1993). Bury, Sellick and Yamamoto (2012, p. 17)
James Bury stated that task-based activities provide “students with an opportunity to function in an autonomous context, further developing their confidence and empowering them”. In the context of Japanese tourism and hospitality undergraduate courses, incorporating task-based activities allows students to employ the knowledge they have gained in a communicative manner to achieve authentic goals.

Making classroom presentations and writing individual projects in a foreign language can seem overwhelming for students, leading to affective filters being raised (Krashen, 1981). However, they also provide the opportunity for students to view their own abilities more positively (Harter, 1999), enhance self-confidence (Nezlek, Kafetsios & Smith, 2008), and augment their willingness to engage in communication (Pearson, Nelson, Titsworth & Harter, 2011). Thus, they can play an important role in tourism and hospitality education.

In order to facilitate student development, projects and presentations must be student-led, as by working autonomously, learners not only practise language skills and put context-specific knowledge into practice, but also develop critical thinking processes (Beglar & Hunt, 2002) and become less dependent on the teacher (Fewell, 2010). The ability to support students’ autonomy is often viewed as one of the most important factors in humanistic teaching (Deci, Ryan & Williams, 1996) and encourages students to value the task and to view it positively (Grolnick, Ryan & Deci, 1991). Consequently, developing student autonomy enhances engagement (Connell, 1990) and positively influences cognitive behavior (Zin & Eng, 2014).

The behaviors that educators exhibit can affect students’ feelings towards, and engagement in, learning, including providing choice, encouraging self-initiation, minimising the use of controls, acknowledging the perspective and feelings of others (Grolnick, Deci & Ryan, 1997), and clarifying the relevance of expected behaviors (Skinner & Belmont, 1993) as well as materials and tasks (McAdams, 1993). Further research suggests that suppressing criticism and independent opinions, interfering with students’ natural learning rhythms, and forcing meaningless or uninteresting activities can decrease autonomy (Assor, 1999). It is therefore essential that students are given choices, allowed to work autonomously, encouraged to offer their own opinions, and given the opportunity to engage with materials relevant to them.

When providing students with choices in assessments, certain aspects of their decision-making processes must be considered. Taylor (1984, p. 3) defined decision-making as a process that “implies deliberation and thought and suggests a conscious act”, and Brinkers (1972, p. 19) stated that decision-making is a deliberate act made “in the hope, expectation or belief that the actions envisioned in carrying out the selected alternative will accomplish certain goals”. However, when faced with decisions, students can often make selections reflectively, based on natural reaction or unconscious acts (Carroll & Johnson, 1990).
Conditions such as the student’s norms, habits and personal characteristics, the limits of available information, constraints in the selection of alternatives, and the acceptance of an implemented course of action all influence the decisions that students make (Tversky & Kahneman, 2000). While the level of influence that each condition has is unique to each individual and dependent on the student’s own values and perceptions, there are major cultural influences that link a group of learners together.

Differing levels of knowledge of the variables that constitute a decision can create uncertainty, making the decision process more complex. Students with insufficient information are more likely to experience difficulty identifying the decision problem, the resources available for solving the problem, and the events that may affect the outcome (Payne, Bettman & Johnson, 1993). However, a decision environment that is characterised by too much information can make the process more challenging as the student is forced to manage too wide a range of factors and their interconnectedness (Moody, 1983). The decision can also be made more complex by time pressures, the magnitude of perceived difference between each alternative, and the number of people involved in the decision-making process. It is therefore imperative for educators to provide students with equal amounts of input material for each possible alternative, sufficient time for the decision-making process, and choices that can be easily compared.

Methodology

Participants

Eighty-eight students from all four year groups of the Tourism and Business Management Department and the English and I.T. Department at the university enrolled in three different English for Tourism and Hospitality classes. The classes were made up of 46 (Class A), 26 (Class B) and 16 (Class C) mixed-ability students. Throughout the academic year, a total of nine students from the three classes dropped out. Consequently, this article describes data collected from 79 students (M = 20.1 years old, SD = 1.7).

Materials and Procedure

The three courses were taught over a 15-lecture semester at a university in the Kanto region of Japan. The different classes covered the same course materials focusing on five different areas: Asia and Oceania, Europe, Africa, North and Central America, and South America. The course structure was as follows: Lessons 1-5 focused on Singapore, Greece, Botswana, Alaska, and Argentina. Lessons 6 and 7 were used as assessment lessons. Lessons 8-12 focused on Bhutan, Switzerland, Tunisia, Jamaica,
and Chile. Lessons 13 and 14 were assessment lessons and Lesson 15 was set aside for review and feedback.

The students in the three classes were assessed in four different ways: individual written projects, individual presentations, group presentations, and group conversations. All of the assessment components had equal weighting towards the students’ final grade. Due to time constraints created by the different sizes of the groups, Class A and B students were assessed via individual projects, group presentations, and group conversations, while Class C students were assessed via individual projects, individual presentations, and group conversations. For individual projects, individual presentations, and group presentations, students were given a free choice of which destinations they could focus on. For the group conversation assessment, the students could only choose destinations that had been covered in the course materials.

Data was collected via a tally count of destinations chosen by all of the students for their assessments. After the assessments had been completed, a total of 12 semi-structured interviews were conducted with respondents selected using a convenience sampling method. It should be noted that while this method allows general data and trends to be obtained, it can lead to sampling bias. Illustrative comments from the interviews have been presented to support the findings. All data were collected anonymously and the purpose of the research was explained to all participants. It was clearly stated that their contribution was voluntary. The significance of the results was tested using Pearson chi-squared tests.

**Results**

Table 1 illustrates that the majority of students participating in the courses opted for countries in Europe (33.5%) and Asia and Oceania (30.1%). Destinations in North and Central America were the third most frequently selected (15.5%), followed by South America (13.1%) and Africa (7.8%). These results indicate that even though the course materials focused on the five different regions equally, the students still tended to select destinations from regions other than Africa.

When asked about the factors influencing their choices, students often referred to previous travel experiences and/or a personal interest in a country, area or culture as their main reason for selecting a destination to focus on. This can be seen in student comments, such as *I have been there, so I could use that experience*, *It’s the only place outside of Japan that I have been to*, *I’m interested in the music and culture of Korea*, and *The USA is the best place in the world, so I chose there*. Also, the perceived amount of information available regarding the areas also affected choice, as shown in comments such as *I thought it would be easy to find lots of information about the UK*, *It was easy to find a lot of websites that were about Canada written in English and Japanese*, and *China is a big country with lots of history, so I could write a lot*. 
Table 1. Choices of destination by region and assessment type

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Assessment</th>
<th>Region</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Asia and Oceania</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Europe</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Africa</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>North and Central America</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>South America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual projects</td>
<td></td>
<td>25</td>
<td>31.6</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>41.8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>79</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual presentations</td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group presentations</td>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>28.0</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>44.0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>25</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group conversations</td>
<td></td>
<td>24</td>
<td>26.7</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>23.3</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14.4</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>17.8</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>17.8</td>
<td>90</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>62</td>
<td>30.1</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>33.5</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>13.1</td>
<td>206</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

However, when presented with a restricted choice in the group conversation component of the assessment, the number of student groups that opted to focus on African destinations, or at least include them in their conversations, was 13 (14.4%). While still the smallest percentage of the five areas, it does indicate increased engagement with African destinations in comparison to the other assessment types. Furthermore, as each group consisted of two or three students, a total of 28 students were demonstrating knowledge of African destinations and a willingness to use that knowledge in a context important to them, i.e. during an assessment. When the choice of destination was restricted, students stated that it was easier to decide, indicated in comments such as *I knew that I needed to choose a place from the teacher’s list, so that made it easier, I was surprised, but relieved when I knew we had to choose a country from the lessons,* and *When we had an open choice, there were so many options. It was difficult for me to think where to start.* A Pearson chi-squared test indicates that the difference in destination selection when choice was restricted compared with an open choice was statistically significant, where \( \chi^2(1, N = 206) = 9.95, p = 0.0016. \) Thus, (1) H1 “Limiting student choice of destinations will increase engagement with African destinations in assessments” is supported.

Table 2 indicates that the most popular region for choice of destination during individual and group assessment types was Europe (40.7% and 27.8%, respectively), followed by Asia and Oceania (34.1% and 27.0%), North and Central America (12.1% and 18.3%), South America (9.9% and 15.7%), and finally Africa (3.3% and 11.3%). While African destinations were chosen least often for both assessment types, there was a difference of 8% between them. Furthermore, the difference between the most and least popular destinations was higher in individual assessments (37.4%) than in group assessments (16.5%). This implies a greater willingness to engage with destinations across the five regions during group assessments. The Pearson chi-squared test indicates students engaged with African destinations significantly more
often in group assessments than during individual assessments, where $x^2(1, N = 206) = 4.55, p = 0.0329$. Thus, (2) $H1$ “Students will engage with African destinations more during group assessments than in individual assessments” is supported.

Students stated that they were more confident engaging with African destinations in groups as they felt that they would not be so isolated and open for negative feedback or comments, indicated in comments such as *I wasn’t confident to choose a strange place by myself, I thought it would be easier to write about a less famous place in a group*, and *In a group, it felt easier to talk about an unusual place*. Some of the comments in relation to this item were disappointing as they highlight the fact that many students still view African countries as “poor” and that some members of the groups were worried they would be laughed at or thought strange if they chose an African destination; for example, *I wanted to choose a clean place for my presentation, but it was OK to talk about a bad place with other students*, *People might have thought I am a bit strange [if I chose an African destination]*, and *It is more likely people would laugh if I chose a poor country*. It is stereotypically negative views such as these that need to be addressed in order to encourage students to engage with all cultures, countries, and peoples.

### Table 2. Choices of destination by region and individual or group assessment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Assessment</th>
<th>Region</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Asia and Oceania</td>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>North and Central America</td>
<td>South America</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>34.1</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>40.7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>27.0</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>27.8</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>30.1</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>33.5</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>7.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It was also stated that it was easier to incorporate African destinations into the group conversations as it was possible to use them as comparisons with destinations in other regions, indicated in comments such as *In the conversation, we could compare the different places, We could talk about how Europe and Africa are different, and It was good to use our African place to show how big and developed Singapore and Switzerland are*. In view of this last point and another comment (*We didn’t need to focus the whole conversation on an African destination, we could just use a bit of information about it*), it may be worthwhile to make a distinction between main focus, equal focus, and minimal focus on destinations during group conversations in future studies.

Table 3 indicates that student choices of destinations for presentations and other assessment types followed a similar pattern, with European destinations being most
commonly chosen (40.5% and 32.0%), followed by Asia and Oceania (35.1% and 29.0%), North and Central America (16.2% and 15.4%), South America (8.1% and 14.2%), and Africa (0% and 9.5%). However, while the ranking of the regions was the same, it is notable that no African destinations were chosen during presentations, whereas 9.5% of the destinations chosen for other assessment types were from the African continent. This is a striking difference and implies that students were far more willing to engage with African destinations when they were not making a presentation in front of their teacher and peers. A Pearson chi-squared test indicated that the students were significantly less likely to engage with African destinations during presentation-style assessments than other kinds of assessments, where $x^2(1, N = 206) = 13.73, p = 0.0002$. Thus, (3) H1 “Students will engage with African destinations less during presentation-style assessments than during other assessment formats” is supported.

| Table 3. Choices of destination by region and presentations or other assessment types |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Type of Assessment               | Region          | Asia and Oceania | Europe | Africa | North and Central America | South America | Total |
| Presentations                    | No. | %   | No. | %   | No. | %   | No. | %   | No. | %   | No. | %   | No. |
| Others                           | 13  | 35.1| 15  | 40.5| 0   | 0   | 6   | 16.2| 3   | 8.1| 37  |
| Total                            | 62  | 30.1| 69  | 35.5| 16  | 7.8| 32  | 15.5| 27  | 13.1| 206 |

Similar to the responses gained in relation to individual and group assessments, students stated that they were more comfortable dealing with African destinations in a context which they perceived to be less threatening. This is indicated in comments such as *I would have been scared talking about a place that people might not have liked. I chose Guam because I know it is a place Japanese tourists like to go to*, *Talking about an African place in front of the class would have made me very nervous. I think it was better to talk about South Korea, and It was OK to use an African destination when it was just the teacher listening. The other students could not see or hear what we were talking about*. A desire to write presentations on destinations that they perceived to be most interesting to the other students was also identified as a reason for focusing more on destinations in Europe and Asia and Oceania, as shown in comments such as *I knew that the other students would want to hear about the UK, I think most of the students in the class like the USA and want to go there. That’s why I chose there, and Everyone wants to go to France. It’s interesting.*
Limitations

It must be noted that the group conversations for the assessment with the restricted choice were written and conducted after the other open-choice assessment types, and this may have affected student choice. This can be identified in comments such as My presentation was on Canada, so I wanted to do somewhere not so usual, I didn’t want all of my tests to be on either Asia or Europe, and I thought it would be too easy to choose another European country. Furthermore, during the individual projects, individual presentations, and group presentations, the students only focused on one country, whereas during the group conversations, many student groups decided to speak about multiple destinations from within the restricted choice. This was interesting as it was not an option that had been discussed with the students, but seems to have been generally interpreted as the accepted approach.

Furthermore, the courses were not conducted in isolation and other external factors, including both formal and informal learning, may have affected the findings outlined above (Erstad, Gilje, Sefton-Green & Vasbo, 2009).

Conclusion

During task-based activities and assessments, it is imperative that students are able to choose which destinations they focus on in order to help them gain a full sense of ownership of their work. However, it is also important for educators to promote a well-rounded approach to global studies, especially in tourism and hospitality courses. The findings presented in this paper indicate that by giving learners the opportunity to study African destinations and then encouraging them to use the knowledge they have gained by limiting choice to the destinations covered in the course materials, more students will choose African destinations than when given a completely free choice. Thus, in order to encourage more interaction with a wider range of tourism destinations, it may paradoxically be better to avoid giving students a totally free choice.

It was also found that students were more likely to engage with African destinations in group assessments and assessments other than presentations. Unfortunately, some of the reasons given by the participating students for this were found to be based on stereotypically negative views of Africa. Therefore, as a first stage in an action plan to increase student engagement with less popular or negatively viewed destinations, educators should teach courses using materials that encourage students to question their own attitudes and possible stereotypical views of certain destinations, cultures, and peoples. As a second step, they should aim to incorporate group assessments and assessments other than presentations into their courses.

While teaching any course, educators can either reinforce or challenge stereotypes and negative sociological ideologies (Apple, 1990). This is especially true in tourism and hospitality courses, which often have a multicultural aspect to them. By encouraging students to engage with issues and destinations in Africa and to
view the continent in a reflective and neutral manner, educators can help revise negative and damaging opinions. If educators are “social leaders, cultural advocates, and moral visionaries” as claimed by Purpel (1998, p. 361), encouraging students to engage with Africa more is a positive step forward.

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References


Research Paper

Local foods as an Impetus for Strengthening Leisure, Recreation and Sustainable Tourism in East Africa

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Abstract: Leisure and recreation are relatively young fields of study in East Africa; as such, there is a scarcity of published information in these fields. Tourism on the other hand, has been extensively studied in this area. However, studies have focused on economic benefits of tourism. Food is considered to be a central component in all three fields but only a handful of studies have focused on the contribution of local food in the field. This study proposes that promoting local food can enhance leisure, recreation and tourism management leading to sustainability of parks and protected areas in the region.

Keywords: Food, leisure, recreation, tourism, parks and protected areas


Introduction

This article discusses the relationship between local food, leisure, recreation and tourism and the rationale for promoting local foods as a means of stimulating and promoting leisure, recreation and sustainable tourism in East Africa. The recreation and tourism industry in particular, has long been viewed by many scholars and international agencies as having the potential to contribute significantly to community development (Higham, 2005; Seetanah, 2011; UNWTO, 2007). In recent years, the world has witnessed unprecedented growth of tourism leading to major economic and social cultural changes in many developing countries (Staff, 2001). Correspondingly, these changes have increased the focus on tourism for some countries and have raised significant concerns on how agriculture, particularly

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local food productions, can be strengthened through increased tourism demands (Richards, 2002). The literature on tourism has shown that local foods have the potential to promote tourism in specific destinations due to their authentic and distinctive character (Cohen & Avieli, 2004).

Food is considered to be an essential component of our daily lives not only from physiological and nutritional point of view but also from psychological, sociological, economic and cultural perspectives. It is argued that “we are what we eat” (Bell, 1997), and that we normally choose to eat particular types of foods and discard others to be what we aspire to be, to satisfy our own personal internal motivations and/or for the purpose of impressing our significant others (Richards, 2002), with Valentine (1999) contending that we are caught between such discourses of self-control in relation to food, and the pleasurable, hedonistic, and social aspects of eating, which are related to identity, bodily pleasures and sexual desires.

The literature on tourism has extensively linked tourism with food consumption (Cohen & Avieli, 2004; Hall, Sharples, Mitchell, Macionis & Cambourne, 2003). Local food production and consumption has been widely viewed as a tool for fulfilling tourist experiences, identity formation (there is a strong relationship between certain localities and certain types of food), promoting food mobility, enhancing leisure for tourists, promoting recreation to tourists (some tourists are involved in planting, harvesting and processing local foods), enhancing cultural capital, promoting localisation to counterbalance the effects of globalisation, spreading the local taste and culture, selling the local destination, promoting local food production, creating employments and boosting the local economy in general (Boniface, 2003; Hall & Sharples, 2008; Hall et al., 2003; Hjalager & Richards, 2002; Telfer & Wall, 2000).

The relationship between food consumption and tourist expenditure is interesting in its own right, with some scholars arguing that expenditures between a quarter and a third of tourist expenses are attributable to food and beverages (see for example, Hall et al., 2003; Telfer & Wall, 2000). It has also been argued that in some niche markets, this rate may be even higher (Robinson & Clifford, 2012). Correspondingly, various scholars have shown that food and wine tourism is emerging as an increasingly important component of rural diversification and development (Hall, 2000a, 2000b) and that tourists visiting rural areas for the purpose of experiencing local foods and favourite wines consider such experiences as part of their leisure and recreation (Alant & Bruwer, 2004).

The relationship between leisure, recreation and tourism has been widely explored in the literature (e.g. Leiper, 1990; Mannell & Iso-Ahola, 1987; Mathieson & Wall, 1982; Mieczkowski, 1981; Murphy, 1985). Some of the latter mentioned authors have argued that specific types of tourism can be distinguished based on leisure attributes (Hamilton-Smith, 1987), while others have pointed out that tourism is a special form of leisure, having its own special characteristics (Leiper, 1990). Similarly,
Moore, Cushman & Simmons (1995, p. 68) have shown that leisure and tourism are inextricably connected and make the case that “the fields of leisure and tourism are clearly fuzzy or overlapping and creating taxonomies that separate the two is not only a difficult task but it may also obscure their similarities”. In a similar view, (Mckercher, 1996, p. 563) contended that “the line between tourism and recreation in most national parks blurs to such an extent that one is indistinguishable from the other”.

Leisure, recreation and tourism have also been described as a function of time (Mathieson & Wall, 1982; Murphy, 1985). These authors have argued specifically that leisure is a measure of time, the discretionary time remaining after work, sleep, and necessary personal and household chores. Recreation, on the other hand, has been described as encompassing a wide variety of activities that are undertaken during leisure (Mathieson & Wall, 1982; Murphy, 1985). Likewise, tourism has sometimes been viewed within the broader framework of leisure and recreation (Molnar, Eby & Hopp, 1996). This view is supported by Mieczkowski (1981) who described tourism as an aspect of recreation that he viewed as leisure. Smith and Godbey (1991) argued that travel undertaken in relative freedom as a pleasurable, intrinsically rewarding activity falls within most conceptualisation of leisure or recreation. Although distinctions between tourism, leisure, and recreation have often led to the development of separate strands of research, there is an increasing awareness of the linkages between the three phenomena (Mathieson & Wall, 1982; Murphy, 1985). In pointing out the relationship between leisure, recreation and tourism, Smith & Godbey (1991) concluded that recreation and leisure scholars are making increasing contributions to the literature on tourism and leisure.

Despite the importance of local food in tourism, leisure and recreation, local food consumption has largely been neglected in the tourism literature, particularly in developing countries where tourism is an important contributor to the economy. This study explores the literature on local food, leisure and recreation and argues that a clear understanding of the nexus between these concepts can promote sustainable tourism, leisure and recreation in East African countries. This connection is particularly important because tourism in these countries depends primarily on natural resources such as forestry, mountain landscapes, beach and wildlife (Adger, Huq, Brown, Conway & Hulme, 2003; Thomas & Twyman, 2005; World Bank, 2000). However, the quality of some of these natural resources have been declining over time due a number of factors including climate change thus, jeopardising further tourism development. In addition to that, relying heavily on natural resources, particularly wildlife, implies that other potentials have not been fully explored and utilised. This can be attributed to lack of knowledge and experience as suggested by Tosun (2000) and Weiler & Ham (2002) as well as lack of understanding of the connection between tourism, leisure, recreation, park and protected areas.
Local food consumption in the tourism industry is not only a means of generating revenue, but is also an integral part of the overall tourist experience (Boniface, 2003; Hall & Sharples, 2008; Hjalager & Richards, 2002). Local food consumption can therefore be one of the motivating factors for tourists to visit and revisit the destination, particularly if the food and the related services are of high quality. Literature on tourism shows that locally distinctive food can be important both as a tourism attraction and in helping to shape the image of a destination (Cohen & Avieli, 2004; Hall et al., 2003; du Rand & Heath, 2006). This paper focuses on three main research questions: What is the tourist demand for local foods? What is the link between local food and parks/protected areas? What is the role of local food in tourism, recreation and leisure settings?

Methodology

A literature review was carried out between January and June 2014 via electronic search using online scientific databases such as African Journals Online (AJOL-3 articles), Google Scholar (35 articles), Springer (7 articles), Elsevier (10 articles), SagePub (6 articles), ScienceDirect (5 articles), and Tandfonline (20 articles). The research questions and keywords such as “local + food”, “local + food + tourism”, “local + food + leisure” and “local + food + recreation” were used in this study to construct search strings for use with the electronic databases. These databases were chosen because they contained most of the information required for this review. A thorough appraisal of articles was conducted and resulted in the selection of 176 articles. A further in-depth review of these articles led to a final selection of 86 articles which specifically focused on food, tourism, leisure and recreation.

During the search, preference was first given to information published in leading tourism journals such as Annals of Tourism Research, Journal of Travel Research, Tourism Management, Journal of Sustainable Tourism and Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Research. In order to obtain as many articles as possible for the review, the author searched the above keywords in the entire article instead of only searching from titles and abstracts. Only articles written in the English language were included in the review.

Tourists’ demands and motivations for local foods

This study draws largely from the social psychological theory of tourist motivation (Iso-Ahola, 1982). Description of why tourists travel and what their behaviours are (Crompton, 1979) and motivation’s role in determining tourist behaviour (Dann, 1981) provided significant understanding and guidance for this study. Motivation studies (e.g. Crompton, 1979; Iso-Ahola, 1982), show that tourists travel because they are motivated by both internal and external (push and pull) factors. Dann
(1981) defined tourist motivation as a “meaningful state of mind which adequately disposes” an individual or group of individuals to travel. The pull and push factors are considered to be one of the major factors motivating tourists to taste local food and other products (Kim, Goh & Yuan, 2010).

Quan & Wang (2004) argued that food consumption constitutes a primary activity, attraction, and “peak” experience which motivate tourists to travel and visit a particular destination. According to Hall et al. (2003), food plays a significant role in the decision-making process when tourists are choosing a destination and that it is becoming an increasingly essential component in tourism and tourists’ motivation.

However, “the precise approach one adopts to understand the nature of tourism demand is largely dependent upon the disciplinary perspective of the researcher” (Hall & Page, 2006, p. 84). For instance, geographers view demand in a uniquely spatial manner as “the total number of persons who travel, or wish to travel, to use tourist facilities and services at places away from their places of work and residence” (Mathieson & Wall, 1982); thus, for geographers, demand is related to space and motivation. From economists’ point of view, tourist demand is considered as “the schedules of the amount of any product or service which people [tourists] are willing and able to buy at each specific price in a set of possible prices during a specified period of time”. Similarly, “psychologists view demand from the perspective of motivation and behavior” (Cooper, 1993, p.15). It is clear from these three perspectives that motivation is one of the major constructs in defining demand.

Literature shows that there are many factors motivating tourists to travel to various destinations during holidays. These include a desire to escape from a mundane environment, the pursuit of relaxation and recuperation functions, an opportunity for play, the strengthening of family bonds, prestige, gain social enhancement among peers, social interaction, educational opportunities, wish fulfilment and social interaction, educational opportunities, wish fulfilment and social interaction, educational opportunities, wish fulfilment as well as shopping (Ryan, 1991). Hall & Page (2006) argued that probably one of the most useful conceptualisation of tourism motivation is that of Dann’s (1981) who simplified the principal elements of tourist motivation into: travel as a response to what is lacking yet desired, destination pull in response to motivational push, motivation as fancy, motivation as classified purpose, motivation typologies, motivation and tourist experiences, motivation as definition and meaning. Similarly, Cohen (1972) distinguished between four types of travellers on the basis of their motivation and experiences to travel: the organised mass tourist, the individual mass tourist, the drifters and the explorers. Research has shown that local food is part of a social and cultural lifestyle that many tourists seek to experience during their trips (Mak, Lumbers & Eves, 2012). The quest to experience local food has been increasing in recent years and has been associated with a number of pull and push motivational factors such as culture (Nield, Kozak & LeGrys, 2000), social (Torres, 2002), variety-seeking (e.g. Quan & Wang, 2004; Chang, Kivela & Mak, 2011),
exposure effect and past experience (Richards, 2002; Cohen & Avieli, 2004) and motivational factors such as pleasure (Kivela & Crotts, 2006; Kim, Eves & Scarles, 2009; Kivela & Crotts, 2009; Chang, Kivela & Mak, 2010).

In relation to sustainable tourism, literature suggests that local food can have an important role to play in sustainable tourism as a result of its ability to satisfy a complex range of demands – from producer concerns about the importance of reducing food miles to tourist demands for iconic products that appear to say something about a region’s place and culture (Sims, 2009). It has been argued that it is important to recognise the benefits that local food can offer to tourists as much to the actions of producers, suppliers and restaurateurs in influencing tourist behaviour (Sims, 2010).

**Food in Parks and Protected Areas**

Local food production and consumption can play a direct and/or indirect role in the sustainability of parks and other protected areas. However, issues related to foods and conservation of protected areas has received scant attention in the literature. In most cases, attention has been paid to the conflict between protected areas and the surrounding communities. The development and implementation of alternative livelihood projects such as Integrated Conservation and Development Projects (ICDPs) by donor agencies and conservation organisations has been one of the most commonly applied management prescriptions to alleviate conflicts between protected areas and the local community (Goodwin & Roe, 2001). The rationale behind these projects is to create financial incentives through tourism and thus, reduce the dependence of local communities on protected area resources.

Parks and protected areas provide many opportunities for tourists and recreationists to partake diverse activities such as sightseeing, hiking and biking among others. Some of these areas have eateries where local food is served. The revenues obtained from these facilities are indirectly utilised to support conservation of these resources. Similarly, tourists on their way to and from these resources tend to buy local food from the surrounding communities, which technically reduce the pressure from the local communities whose livelihood depend on these protected areas in one way or the other. Because these communities derive direct benefits from park visitors, they tend to support many conservation activities proposed by park authorities or the government. Increased poaching activities in many protected areas provide a clear example of the lack of local community support for conservation initiatives (Duffy, 2001), particularly in areas where local communities do not get direct benefit from such protected areas. Similarly, some scholars (e.g. Hjalager & Richards, 2002), have contended that local food advertise the identity and culture of local destinations and create a great opportunity for local food producers to add value to their products by creating a special experience for tourists. It can be argued
therefore that local food promote and protect resources in the protected areas (e.g. wildlife) and that indirectly contributes to the sustainability of these areas.

Several scholars have argued that food, and in particular, sustainable modes of food production, can actually, in many situations bridge the gap between the three sustainability dimensions (Gössling, Garrod, Aall, Hille, & Peeters, 2011). For instance, in some protected areas, governments allow some forms of sustainable harvesting in certain periods of the year (e.g. hunting for meat in authorised blocks and quotas). This provides a clear example where protected areas are contributing to the sustainability of food and the community at large. Game harvesting is considered to be an essential source of protein for many people in Africa, where animal husbandry is limited by environmental conditions and the success of conservation efforts depends on providing benefits to the people (Carpaneto & Fusari, 2000). Literature shows that sustainable exploitation of wildlife is a common practice in some tropical countries especially in East Africa, Western and central Africa, South America and Southeastern Asia (Caro, Young, Cauldwell & Brown, 2009). It is contended that sustainable exploitation of wildlife provides assurance of food supply for local people and encourages economic development without a decline in the flora and fauna or affect biodiversity (Caro et al., 2009; Carpaneto & Fusari, 2000). For instance, Caro et al., (2009) showed that in Tanzania, residents can get a permit that allows them to shoot a total of 22 species of wildlife for meat in some designated areas. In six of these species, only males are legally hunted but for the other 16 species, animals of any age or sex can be shot.

Similarly, literature shows that organised hunting of wild animals for sport can have considerable conservation benefits (Lewis & Jackson, 2005; Lindsey, Roulet & Romanach, 2007). It is contended that areas set aside for hunting big game animals protect many areas that otherwise could have been turned into agricultural land (Pelkey, Stoner & Caro, 2000). Another benefit that is derived from sports hunting is that tourist hunters are mainly interested in the trophy while the meat from the killed animals is normally given to the community as a source of protein or sold to generate revenues. Thus, it can be argued that sports tourism does provide a direct support to resource sustainability as well as indirect support to food sustainability.

Likewise, literature shows that the protected areas approach to conservation can generate significant social, economic and environmental benefits and has undoubtedly helped to ensure the survival of many species and habitats (Steiner, 2003), which in turn provides a direct source of livelihood to many adjacent communities, particularly in developing countries. Several scholars have indicated that protected areas have been fundamental in providing wild food products, particularly to the poor, for whom securing access to such resources is important for sustaining their livelihoods (see e.g. Roe & Elliott, 2004; Rijsoort, 2000). According to Grivetti & Ogle (2000), wild species provide a broad range of micronutrients and in some geographical areas,
reliance upon such species is critical, especially during months preceding the harvest of domesticated field crops. Such species also play prominent roles in sustaining humans during periods of social unrest and military conflicts, as well as during droughts and other natural catastrophes (Grivetti & Ogle, 2000). Thus, it can be contended that hunting and gathering constitutes an important component of the livelihood of communities living adjacent to parks and protected areas.

The establishment of protected marine reserves (PMRs), is another good example of how protected areas throughout the world contribute sustainably to food production systems. Literature indicates that the establishment of PMRs offers a viable alternative when other forms of fisheries management have proven to be impractical or unsuccessful (Bohnsack, 1990). According to Bohnsack (1990), the potential benefits that may be expected from the establishment of marine reserves include (i) protection of spawning biomass/ stocks, (ii) providing a recruitment source for replenishing fishing grounds in surrounding areas, (iii) supplemental restocking of fished areas through emigration, (iv) maintenance of natural population age structure, (v) maintenance of areas of undisturbed habitat, (vi) insurance against management failures in fished areas, and (vii) enhancement of catches in adjacent unprotected areas through emigration.

Literature shows that marine resources in different parts of the world play a substantial role in contributing to food security and sustainable local livelihoods (Roe & Elliott, 2004). A research conducted by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN, 2003) indicated that approximately one billion people in Asia rely on fish for their primary source of protein and that in general, the global fishing industry employs approximately 200 million people. Studies indicate that approximately 1.7 million km² (or 0.5%) of ocean in the world is designated as protected areas (Chape, Blythe, Fish, Forx & Spalding, 2003). Likewise, it is contended that in addition to the direct benefits of food and other goods, conservation of areas such as water catchment forests and flood plains is vital to sustain delivery of ecosystem services such as water supplies and flood control to urban centres (Roe & Elliott, 2004).

Correspondingly, parks and protected areas in the USA have been linked to food production and consumption. A good example of this is the oyster farming in Drake’s Estero at Point Reyes National Seashore (PRNS) which is located just north of San Francisco in California (Watt, 2002). Both the oyster production and the commercial fishery operations in that area have a long history and it is contended that because of their public values, these operations were allowed by the National Park Service planners to continue under the national seashore status. However, oyster farming in this area has been very controversial over the years because it is considered by US National Park Services (USNPS) to be against the Wilderness Act.
of 1964, which defines wilderness as “untrammeled landscape where the nonhuman forces of nature are to be given free rein.” (Watt, 2002, p.56).

**Food in Recreation and Leisure Settings**

Numerous studies have described the role of food, wines and related activities (e.g. food preparation, eating out etc.) on leisure, recreation and tourism (Hall & Sharples, 2003; Hjalager & Johansen, 2013; Leahy, 2007; Lund et al., 2008). Food is inherently part of our daily lives whether we travel or not and it is an integral part of leisure activities and social events. For instance, during events such as weddings, teambuilding courses and sports competitions (Lund et al., 2008), food is always included as an integral component. Similarly, in rural settings, food may provide an opportunity for excursions with friends or family and enhance the enjoyment of the setting and narrative associated with the products (Hjalager & Johansen, 2013). Similarly, the growing popularity of food trails in some parts of the world has been found to enhance flow experiences for recreationists (Boniface, 2003; Hjalager & Richards, 2002).

It is argued that food does not simply consist of edible items for sale but rather all processes involved in bringing the food to the table (Hjalager & Johansen, 2013). Such processes may involve a myriad of activities such as sowing seeds, weeding, harvesting crops, milking, cooking, roasting, fishing and gardening among others. Literature review shows that it is not uncommon for visitors to participate in food related activities particularly when visiting rural areas (Leahy, 2007). Some visitors partake in these activities not because they are obliged to find their own food but as a form of recreation and leisurely experience. A study conducted by Lund et al., (2008), reported that activities such as foraging for foods such as nuts, mushrooms, berries, herbs and fruit, indeed enhanced the meaningfulness and value of the visitor’s experience, whether the products were eaten on location or taken home. These activities were considered as a form of recreation and leisure at least to some visitors. Similarly, a three-year study conducted by Leahy (2007) indicated that when travelling, 17% of leisure travellers engaged in culinary or wine-related activities, with Hall & Sharples (2003) contending that dining in restaurants is frequently described as the most frequent leisure activity of travellers and represents the second largest daily expenditure in travel and tourism.

Eating out as a leisure activity has become a common occurrence in the lives of most people in recent years, especially in developed countries where people have more discretionary income. A study conducted by Travel Industry Association of America (1998) indicated that more than 67 million travellers (48%) said that they dined out when travelling, and that dining out was the most popular [leisure] activity planned after tourists arrive at a destination. Most people consider dining out as a form of leisure and entertainment rather than just a matter of filling their stomach.
It is contended that much of dining out has to do with self-presentation and the mediation of social relations through images of what is currently valued, accepted and fashionable (Finkelstein, 1989). Dining out, like other contemporary leisure activities, demonstrates a strengthening of the consumer ethic and the importance of commodities in the mediation of interpersonal relations (Finkelstein, 1989). Dining out is also considered to be an important factor in relation to facilitating family leisure, family functioning, including family interaction and communication as well as family bonding and cohesion (Shaw & Dawson, 2001). More specifically, family leisure is seen as encouraging positive interaction between family members, both between siblings and between parents and children (Shaw & Dawson, 2001).

Similarly, the relationship between food preparation, leisure, recreation and gender, has also been explored in the literature. It has been argued that in developing countries, most people, particularly women, spend much of their time in preparing and cooking food and indulging in other household chores and thus, they hardly have free time to participate in various leisure activities [leisure as defined from a free time perspective]. However, Khan (1997) showed that despite rampant poverty and hard work, women still enjoy recreation in their own unique ways. Khan argued that “leisure and recreation seem to be a part of women day-to-day survival strategies and that in response to their busy schedule, women have developed the skills to carve out pleasure from their meetings during every day work, their social visits and festivals, their handicrafts, and their dressing and food preparation”.

The findings in the literature suggest a relationship between food and body image; people generally tend to limit themselves in terms of what they eat in order to maintain a particular body shape. Concerns with weight and appearance among young people, particularly among women, in developed countries are well documented (see for example, Nowak, 1998; O’Dea & Abraham, 2000). Concerns about body image, body dissatisfaction and current trends in eating disorders in developed countries is supported by sociocultural theory which suggests that societal standards for beauty inordinately emphasise the desirability of thinness and that this ideal of thinness is accepted by most women, although it is impossible for many to achieve (Tiggemann, 2001). It is contended that adolescent girls are more vulnerable to issues related to body shape and eating disorders because adolescence is a time of establishing one’s identity, with concomitant increases in self-awareness, self-consciousness, preoccupation with image, and concern with social acceptance (Harter, 1999).

Studies suggest that although weight control is important in maintaining good health, adolescents need a food culture based on foods to eat rather than foods to avoid, and an understanding of suitable weight control measures that are compatible with their health status (Gibbons et al., 1995). There are many health and social consequences of being overweight. Some of the health consequences include diabetes
and coronary heart diseases among others (Tukker, Visscher & Picavet, 2009) while some of the social consequences may include discrimination and failure to participate in some leisure (for instance, serious leisure) and recreation activities (Lewis & Van Puymbroeck, 2008).

Similarly, findings in the literature suggest that excessive lack of food may lead to malnutrition, a condition which may severely affect an individual’s participation in various leisure and recreation activities (Sirgy, 2010). Malnutrition has also been linked to social exclusion in the community. Individuals are considered to be socially excluded if they do not participate in key activities of society (e.g., employment, education, social networks, leisure, housing, access to services) and that exclusion is beyond their control (Harpham, 2009).

Conclusion

Food enhances the nexus between leisure, recreation and tourism and it is a central component of our survival as evidenced and discussed in this article. Despite being vital in meeting our physiological needs, the numerous activities associated with it provide relaxation and pleasure. Food not only satisfies physical needs but also provides opportunities to enhance social relationships, excitement, learning and belonging and thus in this view, it nourishes both the body and the soul (Hjalager & Johansen, 2013).

It has also been shown that food provides an opportunity for excursions with friends or families and thus, strengthens family bonding. This is an essential component in many societies today due the fact that in the contemporary world, many people have become increasingly isolated due to constant work pressure. It has also been shown that food is central in maintaining one’s body image and thus, it contributes positively to leisure and recreation. Lack of food can deter and exclude some people from participating in leisure and recreational activities especially in the developing countries. As such, individuals from many poor countries spend much of their time in searching for food and hence, do not have much time for leisure and recreational activities.

This study also showed that local food is highly valued because it is considered to be more authentic, fresh and cultural. Local food is associated with localisation, culture and identity, and is therefore, suitable for marketing local destinations. Provision of local food also provides a gateway for both visitors and hosts to learn from each other and thus enhances the quality of their lives. As tourism is becoming more and more complex, those destinations with peculiar, distinctive local cuisines may provide a competitive advantage over the ones that do not offer the same.

Food linkages and particularly, local food provide many tangible and intangible benefits including economic, environmental and social cultural which are considered
to be fundamental for the sustainability of parks and protected areas, as well as the community at large. Some of the economic benefits to the community may include provision of supplemental income, stimulating rural entrepreneurship, promoting farm multi-functionality, stimulating agricultural diversification, encourages multitasking in rural settings, promoting gender equity, provision of employment, increasing multiplier effects and leading to reduced financial leakages. From sociocultural perspectives, food linkages may provide the following benefits: link tourists with local people, promote and preserve local culture, promote local destination, enhance place identity, provide authentic experience to visitors, enhance motivation to travel, facilitate learning new culture/lifestyle, contribute to health improvements, provide a source of enjoyment and pleasure to both guests and hosts, contribute to restoration of body and mind and provide recreational benefits. From an environmental perspective, local food linkages tend to reduce carbon footprint, reduce food mileage, promote organic farming, reduce packaging materials problem and contribute to farm preservation.

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Local foods as an impetus for Strengthening Leisure, Recreation and Sustainable Tourism in East Africa


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Research Paper

European and Non-European Tourists’ Perception on Medical Tourism in Thailand

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Abstract: Medical tourism is one of the fastest growing industries in Thailand. As with any businesses, medical tourism should seek to understand its customers’ needs and perceptions for developing a marketing plan. The perceived service image, perceived value, and perceived risks are recognised as important aspects because they play an important role in predicting purchase behavior and achieving strategic planning for competitive advantages. There were more medical tourists from Europe than those from other western countries travelling to Thailand. Every year, people come to Thailand for vacation and medical treatment. Hence, this study aimed to compare the different perceptions of European and non-European tourists (i.e., North America, Australia, and New Zealand) toward medical services in Thailand. Data were collected from 362 respondents using questionnaires and the sample was selected via convenience sampling at tourist spots in Pattaya, Thailand. An independent sample t-test was conducted in order to test the hypotheses.

The results show that Europeans have a better impression of Thailand’s medical services than non-Europeans concerning convenience of travel, transportation arrangements, setting up medical procedures, and coordinating services with patients, hospitals and insurance companies. However, there was also a higher perception of risk for Europeans than non-Europeans when they compared medical treatment with other forms of travelling. While the perceived value of medical service did not show a different perception between Europeans and non-Europeans, they agreed that medical service in Thailand is worthwhile. Therefore, service providers should understand tourist perceptions toward services and respond to their needs by developing service strategies to increase the convenience and trustworthiness of travelling with reasonable prices.

Keywords: Medical tourism, perceived medical service image, perceived risk, perceived value, Thailand


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Introduction

Good health is central to our happiness and well-being. People will live a longer life if they are disease-free. The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) reported that in 2017 and 2018, health care spending will rise to over 6% per year in Asia (Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu Limited, 2016). The factors that influence health care expenditure are the rapidly aging population worldwide, as well as chronic and communicable diseases that have serious repercussions in both developed and emerging countries. In 2016, the number of people diagnosed with diabetes globally is 387 million and is estimated to increase to 592 million by 2035 (Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu Limited, 2016). For the period 2014-2018, the demand for the global health care industry has increased. For example, the spending for health care in North America grows an average of 4.9% annually, Canada has a slightly slower growth at 4.5%, Europe is rising at 2.4%, and Asia and Australasia is increasing at 8.1% (Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu Limited, 2015).

Thailand is well-positioned to be the medical hub of Asia by having a number of internationally accredited medical facilities. The health care industry in Thailand offers four major health service areas, which are medical services, integrative wellness centers, development of Thai herbs, and traditional and alternative Thai medicine. Thailand has over 1,000 public and 300 private hospitals across the country (Board of Investment of Thailand, 2014).

Health care plus tourism is a new form of globalised health care, which is becoming one of the fastest growing sectors with many countries investing in strategic plans to serve this market. Medical tourism is a part of health tourism (Smith & Puczko, 2009). Medical tourism provides tourists the unique attraction of a destination’s facilities for healthcare services (Borman, 2004). English, Mussell, Sheather, and Sommeville (2005) stated that in medical tourism, tourists search for a destination that has the highest technical proficiency, competitive prices, and an attractive destination for relaxation. Since the 18th century, wealthy patients have travelled from developing countries to European countries and the USA for health care services. However, in the late 20th century, the situation is reversed with patients from developed countries travelling to developing countries for health services (Fetscherin & Stephano, 2016).

Thailand has cleverly seized business opportunities for medical tourism by making it an integral part of its tourism and health care industries. Thailand has many JCI-accredited hospitals and US-certified physicians and continuously promotes medical tourism in Bangkok, Chiangmai, Phuket, and Samui Island (Heung, Kucukusta, & Song, 2011). In comparing the medical tourism offered by Thailand and other countries, Cohen (2008) found that Thailand has a competitive edge over other nations which is pricing.
This competitive advantage over other countries has allowed its medical tourism to thrive. The Ministry of Public Health in Thailand and the Kasikorn Research Center found that over 2.5 million international patients have travelled to Thailand for treatment and the top five visitor countries were Japan, U.S., UK, Saudi Arabia and Australia ("Medical Tourism Statistics", 2015).

Singh (2008) highlighted that Colombia, Singapore, India, Thailand, Brunei, Cuba, Hong Kong, Hungary, Israel, Jordan, Lithuania, Malaysia, Philippines, and UAE were the emerging countries for health care destinations, while Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Costa Rica, Mexico, and Turkey were in the process of becoming health care service providers. However, Asia remains the most important medical tourism region (Connell, 2006; Heung et al., 2011). Reports of MTA patient surveys ("Medical Tourism Statistics", 2015), show that the majority of medical travellers were female, 45-65 years old, white or Caucasian, college graduates, with a household income between $50,000 - $100,000. Sixty-four percent of patients that travelled abroad for medical treatment did not have health insurance, 90% of patients or their relatives travelled abroad for tourism activities, 86% were willing to revisit the overseas destinations again for medical treatment, and cost savings motivated 85% of the demand for medical travel.

There are several factors that motivate individuals to seek medical tourism which depend on their health problems or types of symptoms they want to treat. Many

### Table 1. Number of businesses (hotel and restaurant branches) by size in 2010

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Medical service</th>
<th>USA</th>
<th>India</th>
<th>Thailand</th>
<th>Singapore</th>
<th>Malaysia</th>
<th>Mexico</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Heart bypass</td>
<td>113,000</td>
<td>10,000</td>
<td>13,000</td>
<td>20,000</td>
<td>9,000</td>
<td>3,250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heart valve replacement</td>
<td>150,000</td>
<td>9,500</td>
<td>11,000</td>
<td>13,000</td>
<td>9,000</td>
<td>18,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angioplasty</td>
<td>47,000</td>
<td>11,000</td>
<td>10,000</td>
<td>13,000</td>
<td>11,000</td>
<td>15,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hip replacement</td>
<td>47,000</td>
<td>9,000</td>
<td>12,000</td>
<td>11,000</td>
<td>10,000</td>
<td>17,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knee replacement</td>
<td>48,000</td>
<td>8,500</td>
<td>10,000</td>
<td>13,000</td>
<td>8,000</td>
<td>14,650</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gastric bypass</td>
<td>35,000</td>
<td>11,000</td>
<td>15,000</td>
<td>20,000</td>
<td>13,000</td>
<td>8,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hip resurfacing</td>
<td>47,000</td>
<td>8,250</td>
<td>10,000</td>
<td>12,000</td>
<td>12,500</td>
<td>12,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spinal fusion</td>
<td>43,000</td>
<td>5,500</td>
<td>7,000</td>
<td>9,000</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>15,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mastectomy</td>
<td>17,000</td>
<td>7,500</td>
<td>9,000</td>
<td>12,400</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>7,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhinoplasty</td>
<td>4,500</td>
<td>2,000</td>
<td>2,500</td>
<td>4,375</td>
<td>2,083</td>
<td>3,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tummy tuck</td>
<td>6,400</td>
<td>2,900</td>
<td>3,500</td>
<td>6,250</td>
<td>3,903</td>
<td>3,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breast reduction</td>
<td>5,200</td>
<td>2,500</td>
<td>3,750</td>
<td>8,000</td>
<td>3,343</td>
<td>3,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breast implants</td>
<td>6,000</td>
<td>2,200</td>
<td>2,600</td>
<td>8,000</td>
<td>3,308</td>
<td>2,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crown</td>
<td>385</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>243</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tooth whitening</td>
<td>289</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dental implant</td>
<td>1,188</td>
<td>1,100</td>
<td>1,429</td>
<td>1,500</td>
<td>2,636</td>
<td>950</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

want to travel for a change in location or travel based on doctor's recommendation (Lam, Cros, & Vong, 2011). Americans who have no health insurance coverage, especially ageing people, or those who look for less expensive health treatment often go abroad to get medical services in other countries (Beladi, Chao, Ee, & Hollar, 2015).

In order to serve medical tourists well, service providers should be aware that each person has different requirements. Previous studies have shown that tourists from various countries normally have different perceptions toward factors that drive them and this results in different behavior and decision-making. Travellers from different countries have different preferences and expectations. For instance, there are variations between Western and Asian tourists in their destination choice behavior (Kim & Lee, 2000), information search behavior (Chen & Gursoy, 2000), expectations, perceptions and evaluation of services (Yuksel, Kilinc, & Yuksel, 2006).

The statistics of foreign tourists from Western countries who visited Thailand in 2013 indicate more European tourists than Non-European tourists from other western countries (Thailand Authority of Tourism, 2014). Noree, Hanefeld and Smith (2016) examined the number of medical tourists and found that Europeans comprised 13.4%, North Americans, 9.0% and Australasians, 3.8%.

Nevertheless, there is a dearth of research about medical tourism concerning visitors’ characteristics and experience (Yu & Ko, 2012) especially in Thailand. In the field of economics and marketing, perceived value, service quality, and perceived risk are important aspects because they play vital roles in predicting purchase behavior and achieving strategic planning for competitive advantage (Heinonen, 2004; Connell, 2013; Leahy, 2008). Therefore, the purpose of this research is to study the different perceptions of factors that affect the decision making of European and non-European tourists toward medical services in Thailand. Understanding the determinants of tourist perceptions will allow the relevant authorities to focus on the influencing factors that lead to tourist retention. The development of such a study has value to researchers, service providers and practitioners. For researchers, it can enhance knowledge in developing and testing factors related to medical tourism with regard to tourists’ perspectives of benefits and risks. The results help service providers to better justify their service policies, train staff, and produce strategies that can serve western tourists in order to develop better services and medical products for tourists. This will generate higher levels of tourist satisfaction as Alexandris, Kouthouris and Meligdis (2006) as well as Chindaprasert and Yasothornsrikul (2015) stated that push motivation and satisfaction with travel experiences contributes to destination loyalty.
Literature Review

Perceived Medical Service Image

The service quality concept was pioneered by Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry (1985) who found that service quality stems from consumer attitudes as a result of comparing their expectations and the actual performance. In tourism research, tourists compare their expectations and perceived service when they participate in activities (Brady & Robertson, 2001). Five dimensions composing of assurance, empathy, responsiveness, reliability, and tangibility measure the service quality (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1988). The quality image of health care services is based on the perceptions and expectations of customers that they can compare with perceiving service from a service provider. Destination image can influence tourists’ decision-making process and behavior (Chi & Qu, 2008).

Thailand has a competitive advantage in health care service because of its affordability, price, reputation, and strong tourism attributes (Wongkit & McKercher, 2013). However, Gan & Frederick (2011) and Han & Hwang (2013) found additional challenges for tourists, which include language barrier, inefficient communication, low-quality medical care, uncomfortable atmosphere, low-quality service and unfriendly staff. Therefore, service providers should provide better-qualified medical professionals, wider range of medical products, higher continuity of care, facilities that are more modern, enhanced competencies, and well-trained staff (Lee, Han, & Lockyer, 2012).

Perceived Risk

Perceived risk is considered a fundamental concept of consumer behavior and is often used to explain customers’ risk perception and reduction methods (Shin, 2010). The risk refers to the feeling of tourists when purchasing products/services and this does not turn out well. As people often avoid making any mistakes, perceived risk can be one of the important factors to drive consumer behavior (Mitchell, 1999); depending on how customers rate the importance of the target and how serious the possible consequences of a mistake are (Lee, 2009). Normally, tourists not only examine the value of products and services but also try to avoid risk. Tourists are concerned about the money they spend and also their feelings and emotions during the healing process as well as after the treatment period (Leahy, 2008).

When tourists travel, they are also concerned about safety. They prefer to travel to destinations, which are safe and secure (Ramseook-Munhurrun, Seebaluck, & Naidoo, 2015; Longjit & Pearce, 2013; Gunasekaran & Anandkumar, 2012). Destinations which have high security and safety encourages revisits (Kozak, Crotts, & Law, 2007; Quintal & Polczynski, 2010). Hence, Asian countries are often the preferred destination for tourists because of low costs, lack of waiting period,
and treatment using high-tech equipment. The combination of certified national standards and lower costs by hospital and insurance companies encourages customers to pursue medical treatment in Asia.

According to previous surveys, some medical travellers search information from the internet. The question that arises is how do patients assimilate and synthesise the information they derive from websites to make their decisions. Peterson, Aslani, & Williams (2003) stated that patients were aware of biased information from the Internet. Patients pay attention to the context of what is being searched depending on their purpose of seeking information. Bates, Romina, Ahmed and Hopson (2006) argued that the credibility of the source is judged by the quality of the information. The information that customers acquire can be confusing, overwhelming, and contradictory (OECD, 2011). Therefore, Marshall and Williams (2006) suggested that service providers should improve public awareness of critical appraisal tools, develop information literacy and health information tools. The trust and credibility of information are limited by available alternatives, uncertain situations and the possibility of pain and side effects from treatment (Natalier & Willis, 2008).

**Perceived Value**

The concept of perceived value is a relationship between the consumer and the product where the value is estimated by virtue of its comparison, situation, preference, perception, and cognitive-affective context (Fernandez & Bonillo, 2007). Perceived value has been viewed as a comparison between price and quality (Monroe, 1990). Customers usually compare their perceived product’s benefits with the price that they have to pay plus the risks that may occur. If the benefits are higher than the cost, customers make a decision to purchase (Kotler, 2003). If customers are satisfied from evaluating their overall consumption experiences, it is likely that their satisfaction will increase and the opportunities for repurchase will increase too (Chiu, Hsu, Lai & Chang, 2012; Han, 2013). The level of customer satisfaction will increase, if the perceived value is higher than average (Yang & Peterson, 2004).

Customers estimate the price that they have to pay by examining the cost of treatment combined with waiting times, reasonable airfares, and suitable exchange rates (Connell, 2006). Consumers will compare reasonable prices and the amount paid for the quality of the perceived product and service (Kim, Goh, Yuan, 2010; Wan & Chan, 2013; Monroe, 1990; Quintal & Polczynski, 2010). In this comparison, consumers will evaluate the benefit of the product relying on the recognition of product and service (Zeithaml, 1988; Quintal & Polczynski, 2010). A higher price will increase tourists’ expectations of the value promised (Dodds, Monroe, & Grewal, 1991).
Methodology

This study used questionnaires to collect data. The questionnaire that looked at perceived image of medical service was adapted from Wang (2012), Han & Hyun (2015), and Saiprasert (2011). Whereas, the perceived service value and perceived risk questionnaire was adapted from Wang (2012). The questionnaire was divided into five parts. In section one, tourists were asked to disclose demographic data about themselves such as gender, age, marital status, education, and nationality (Europe, America/Canada, Australia/New Zealand). The first section utilised nominal and ordinal scales. In section two, the questions examined tourists’ travel behavior. The questions included frequency of visits to Thailand, purpose of visit, types of medical service, sources of information, and travel companion. The second section also utilised nominal and ordinal scales. The third, fourth and fifth sections asked respondents about their perceived image, perceived risk and perceived value of Thailand’s medical services, respectively. A five-point Likert scale was used ranging from “very low” to “very high”.

The survey was conducted in Pattaya, Thailand. The respondents were selected using convenience sampling at tourist spots such as North Beach, Central Beach, and Jomtein Beach. The questionnaire was administered face-to-face to 200 Europeans and non-Europeans, each. The researchers distributed and collected questionnaires from tourists who used medical services in Thailand and were visiting Pattaya. Some of them directly selected Pattaya as a destination while some others used medical services from hospitals in Bangkok or other cities before visiting Pattaya for a vacation. A total of 385 western tourists from Europe and Non-Europe countries (North America, Australia, and New Zealand) participated in this study. Researchers asked screening questions to determine whether the tourists were from Europe, North America, Australia, and New Zealand and whether or not the tourists used any kind of medical service in Thailand. The tourists were also asked their permission and willingness to fill in the questionnaire.

To test for reliability, the computation of Cronbach’s alpha was used. Nunnally (1978) recommended that if the coefficient alpha is greater than 0.7, there is a strong item covariance. A reliability analysis was carried out using the SPSS software package. The results for reliability analysis were 0.903 for perceived medical service image, 0.953 for perceived risk and 0.863 for perceived value. All three factors had Cronbach’s alpha values greater than 0.70, confirming the internal consistency of the data.

The researchers distributed 400 questionnaires and received 385 completed questionnaires with a collection rate of 96.25%. Unreliable and incomplete questionnaires were removed from the 385 questionnaires and the total number of usable samples was 362.
A frequency analysis was conducted in order to get information about the demographic data and travel behavior of the respondents. The mean and standard deviation were analysed for information about the level of service image, risk, and service value that was perceived by tourists. Finally, an independent sample t-test was conducted in order to test the hypotheses about the difference in perception of variables between respondents from Europe and Non-European countries. Hair, Anderson, Tatham, and Black (1995) claimed that independent sample t-test was used to assess the statistical significance of the difference between two sample means on two different subjects. Levene’s test for the equality of variances also examined for the significance of the F-value. If the significance of the F-value is higher than 0.05, the t-test derived from equal variances has an assumed value. If the significance of the F-value is lower than 0.05, the t-test derived from equal variances has no assumed value. The hypotheses were tested at significance levels of 0.05 and 0.01.

Results

Demographic Factors

The demographics are presented in Table 2. The respondents comprised of 178 Europeans and 184 non-Europeans. The majority of tourists were female (316) with 46 males. The age breakdown is as follows: 6 respondents less than 25 years old, 26-35 years old (38), 36-45 years old (52), 46-55 years old (65), and more than 55 years old (201). In terms of marital status, 165 participants were married, 137 single, and 60 divorced/widowed/other. Regarding the level of education, 186 respondents had a bachelor degree, 130 had a qualification lower than a bachelor degree, and 46 had a degree higher than a bachelor degree.

Table 2. Demographic factors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Number of respondents</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>12.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>316</td>
<td>87.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Less than 25</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>26-35</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>10.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>36-45</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>14.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>46-55</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>18.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>More than 55</td>
<td>201</td>
<td>55.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital status</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>37.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>45.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>16.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2 (con't)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Number of respondents</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lower than a</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>35.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>bachelor degree</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bachelor degree</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>51.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Higher than a</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>12.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>bachelor degree</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country</td>
<td>Non-Europe (USA,</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>49.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Canada, Australia</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>or New Zealand)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>50.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Travel Behavior

The results for travel behavior are presented in Table 3. The frequency of visits to Thailand for medical treatment is as follows: the majority of respondents (275) visited four times or more, 41 visited two times, 28 visited three times and 18 visited one time. Two hundred and fifty-seven participants visited for medical treatment and vacation, 66 for medical treatment and visiting friends/relatives, and 39 for medical treatment and business. The majority of respondents (140) had dental surgery/treatment. Two hundred and eight respondents got information from hospital websites, 98 from friends or relatives, 29 from medical tourism/travel agencies, and 27 from other sources. The number of respondents who visited Thailand alone was 189, 157 came with their spouse or family, and 16 mentioned others.

Table 3. Travel behavior

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Number of respondents</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frequency of visiting Thailand</td>
<td>1 time</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 times</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>11.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3 times</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>7.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4 times and more</td>
<td>275</td>
<td>76.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose of travel</td>
<td>Medical treatment and vacation</td>
<td>257</td>
<td>70.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Medical treatment and visit</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>18.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>friends or relatives</td>
<td></td>
<td>10.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Medical treatment and business</td>
<td>39</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3 (con’t)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of medical services</th>
<th>Dental surgery/treatment</th>
<th>140</th>
<th>28.6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Respondents can select more than one choice)</td>
<td>Cosmetic/plastic surgery</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Circulatory system</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bones, joints and tendons</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>6.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Breast surgery</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cardiology</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Diagnostics</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>11.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ear, nose, throat</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Eye surgery</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>10.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female reproductive system</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Physical exams</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>9.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stomach and bowel</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>13.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Sources of information                   | Friends or relatives    | 98  | 27.0 |
|                                          | Medical tourism/travel agencies | 29 | 8.0 |
|                                          | Hospital websites       | 208 | 57.5 |
|                                          | Other                   | 27  | 7.5  |

| Travel companion                         | Alone                    | 189 | 52.2 |
|                                          | Spouse or family         | 157 | 43.3 |
|                                          | Other                    | 16  | 4.5  |

Testing the Hypotheses

This study aimed to test the hypotheses by comparing the perceived medical image, perceived risk, and perceived value of Thailand for medical treatment between Europeans and non-Europeans using an independent sample t-test. Pizam and Sussmann (1995) stated that tourists of different nationalities have behavioral characteristics that reflect the perceived difference of tourists. Previous research about a country’s consumer behavior has confirmed that culture strongly influences consumer behavior (Forgas-Coll, Palau-Saumell, Sánchez-García, & Callarisa-Fiol, 2012; Souiden & Diagne, 2009). In addition, there is other research which has attempted to explain and show that nationality affects cognition, affection, and conation. Barutçu, Doğan, & Üngüren (2011) studied tourists’ perception toward satisfaction of shopping by comparative analysis with different nationalities. They found that nationality influences the difference in tourists’ perception toward satisfaction. Therefore, it is essential to study tourists of different nationalities in order to understand their perceptions and requirements for serving them in the future.

Hypothesis 1: There is a significant difference of perception of European and non-European tourists toward the perceived image of Thailand’s medical service.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perceived image of medical service</th>
<th>Mean European</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Mean non-European</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t-test</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Accessibility from your country is easy</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>3.73</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>1.19</td>
<td>0.234</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Convenience for travel arrangement</td>
<td>3.94</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td>3.73</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>2.06*</td>
<td>0.039</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Friendliness and helpfulness of the local people</td>
<td>4.10</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>3.99</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>1.23</td>
<td>0.218</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. No language barriers in traveling in Thailand</td>
<td>3.68</td>
<td>1.08</td>
<td>3.56</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td>1.02</td>
<td>0.317</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Safety from crime and terrorist attack</td>
<td>3.73</td>
<td>1.05</td>
<td>3.63</td>
<td>1.02</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td>0.391</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Stable political situation</td>
<td>3.24</td>
<td>1.24</td>
<td>3.29</td>
<td>1.20</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td>0.680</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Well-known and good reputation as a tourist destination</td>
<td>3.89</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>3.88</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>0.891</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Short waiting time for medical examinations</td>
<td>3.95</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>3.89</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>0.58</td>
<td>0.560</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. International hospital accreditation</td>
<td>3.99</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>3.98</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>0.921</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. High standards of medical facilities</td>
<td>3.94</td>
<td>0.77</td>
<td>3.97</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>0.28</td>
<td>0.780</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. High standards of medical staff</td>
<td>3.95</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>3.88</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>0.445</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. The process for setting up medical appointments was convenient</td>
<td>3.96</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>3.68</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>2.83**</td>
<td>0.005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Convenient hospital transportation arrangements</td>
<td>3.91</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>3.70</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td>2.25*</td>
<td>0.024</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Coordinated arrangements between the patient, hospital, third party insurance companies, embassies and other businesses</td>
<td>3.94</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td>3.73</td>
<td>0.87</td>
<td>2.37*</td>
<td>0.018</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Significance level 0.05  ** Significance level 0.01
The results in Table 4 show that the perception of image for medical service was at a high level (high = 3.51-4.50). It was found that for a majority of the factors, Europeans and non-Europeans had no difference in the significance level toward the medical service image of Thailand because the p-value was more than the critical value of 0.05. The factor that did not have a significant difference was *Accessibility from your country is easy* because both Europeans and non-Europeans had less problems of accessing the service from their country because the mean was at a high level (3.85 and 3.83). In addition, both Europeans and non-Europeans showed no significant difference for the attributes: friendliness and helpfulness of the local people, no language barriers, safety from crime and terrorist attack, stable political situation, well-known and good reputation of the destination, short waiting time for medical examinations, international hospital accreditation, high standards of medical facilities, and staff. That means both Europeans and non-Europeans had the same perception level toward those attributes.

However, there was a significant difference toward the service image of Thailand at a significance level of 0.01 for the attribute of the convenience of medical appointments (*t* = 2.83, *p* = 0.005). There were differences about the service image of Thailand at a significance level of 0.05 for the attributes: travel arrangements (*t* = 2.06, *p* = 0.039), visa and immigration procedures (*t* = 2.58, *p* = 0.013), hospital transportation (*t* = 2.25, *p* = 0.024), and coordination between the patient, hospital, third party insurance companies, embassies and other businesses (*t* = 2.37, *p* = 0.018). Europeans’ perceptions were at a higher level than those attributed to non-Europeans.

Hypothesis 2: There is a significant difference of perception of European and non-European tourists toward perceived medical risk in Thailand.

Table 5. The perceived risk of medical service in Thailand

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perceived medical risk</th>
<th>Mean European</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Mean non-European</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t-test</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Medical treatment in hospitals has potential risks</td>
<td>3.58</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>3.54</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>0.42</td>
<td>0.675</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Participating in medical tourism puts my life at risk because of the lack of post-operative care</td>
<td>3.66</td>
<td>0.98</td>
<td>3.51</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>1.39</td>
<td>0.163</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The results in Table 5 demonstrate that there was no difference in the significance level toward the perception of medical risk between Europeans and non-Europeans because the p-value is more than the critical value of 0.05. There was no difference in the significance level toward the perception of medical risk for the attributes: potential risks, life at risk because of the lack of post-operative care, the possibility of side effects, and little recourse against malpractice.

Whereas the attribute *travelling to Thailand for medical treatment has potential risks when compared with other forms of travel and tourism* had a difference for the perceived risk between Europeans and non-Europeans at the significance level of 0.05 (t = 3.36, p = 0.019). Europeans perceived travelling to Thailand for medical treatment as a higher risk than non-Europeans. Therefore, it shows that tourists still perceive some risk when using medical services in Thailand. The study found that Europeans and non-Europeans perceived medical risk at a moderate to high level (Moderate = 2.51-3.50; High = 3.51-4.50). Hence, it is essential for hospitals to provide more information to tourists in order to develop more trust for the medical services.

Hypothesis 3: There is a significant difference of perception of European and non-European tourists toward the perceived medical value of Thailand.
Table 6. The perceived value of medical service in Thailand

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perceived medical value</th>
<th>Mean European</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Mean non-European</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t-test</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Compared to the fee I am asked to pay, Thailand medical tourism offers value for money</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>3.74</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>1.20</td>
<td>0.229</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Compared to the potential risk I bear, Thailand medical tourism is worthwhile to me</td>
<td>3.89</td>
<td>0.77</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>1.64</td>
<td>0.112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Compared to the time away from work/leisure that medical care requires, Thailand medical tourism is worthwhile to me</td>
<td>3.88</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>3.73</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td>1.62</td>
<td>0.111</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Significance level 0.05  ** Significance level 0.01

The results in Table 6 show that Europeans and non-Europeans had no difference in the significance level toward the medical value of Thailand because the p-value is more than the critical value of 0.05. Their perceived medical value was at a high level (High = 3.51-4.50). There was no difference in the significance level toward the perceived medical value when they compared what they received from service with the fee, the potential risk, and the time away from work/leisure. Thus, Thai medical tourism is deemed to be worthwhile to them.

Discussion and Recommendations

This study found that the majority of tourists visited Thailand on vacation and underwent their medical treatment during their stay. Thailand has been recognised as an Asian medical tourism destination (Henderson, 2009). The results of the hypotheses testing indicate that there was a difference with regard to some aspects. European travellers perceived a higher medical service image than non-Europeans with regard to setting up medical appointment, transportation service, and coordination of arrangements between the patient, hospital, third party insurance companies, embassies and other businesses. Moreover, visitors perceived that Thailand
has a high level of standard for medical services and facilities, international hospital accreditation, and short waiting time for medical examinations. Therefore, hospitals and clinics should respond to the needs of their foreign patients by including services regarding accommodation, transportation, and visa arrangements to help visitors have more convenient travel options.

In addition, Thailand is a fascinating tourism destination with a good reputation for easy accessibility from other countries, its friendly and helpful local people and safety from crime and terrorist attack. The Medical Tourism Association (2013) stated that culture was one of the most important factors for medical tourism; obviously, people in Thailand always throw out a warm and friendly welcome for foreigners, which usually encourages tourists to come again. However, Thai staff in hospitals and the hospitality industry have language problems. While the results show that the respondents had no language barriers travelling in Thailand, it should be noted that Thailand is a non-English speaking country so, the majority of the service staff cannot communicate well in English or other languages. Hence, the staff should attempt to learn English instead of using translation services because fluency in a patient’s language has also been identified as a motivational factor for tourism (Medical Tourism Association, 2013).

In examining perceived value, visitors will check the difference in health care costs between home and host country before making decisions. Previous studies have acknowledged that Thailand is an inexpensive country for medical treatment when compared with western countries. Customers are always concerned about price fairness, which affects their choice behavior (Ryu & Han, 2010), as well as the post-purchase decision making process (Jiang & Rosebloom, 2005). Therefore, hospitals should realise that reasonable pricing is very important, and is linked to the customer’s trust in service so that they will be perceived as less risky. Their perceptions will indirectly affect their word-of-mouth communication. Moreover, if hospitals can provide superior service that travellers can trust, this would encourage wealthy patient-travellers to visit more often (Han & Hyun, 2015). Crooks, Turner, Snyder, Johnston and Kingsbury (2011) suggested that hospitals should promote and advertise more about their international and national accreditation, wide range of specialised medical procedures, staff competency and professionalism, and high-quality health care. Furthermore, hospitals should be concerned about the continuity of care and post-operative treatment to lower patients’ mental anxiety. To lower risks, service providers should promote legal policies that can protect cross-border customer health and safety. Lastly, service providers, practitioners, and policy and regulation makers should take into account medical and ethical issues. In conclusion, the results of this study serve not only to assist medical service providers to understand the perceptions of tourists, but also show the direction for medical practitioners in making medical tourism a win/win option for themselves and their customers.
Conclusion

The findings and implications of this study are important for service providers and policy makers as these are the considerations that potential medical tourists look at when they select their destinations for medical travelling. This study aimed to study the perception of tourists about medical service in Thailand regarding its image, perceived value, and perceived risk. The findings of this study provide valuable information for medical service providers to understand the perception of travellers and provide marketing strategies to service them. The study found that Thailand has a high medical service image with moderate to high perceived risk, and a high perceived value of service. European and non-European travellers showed differences regarding some attributes of the perceived medical service image, and also in perceived risk but showed none when it came to perceived value. Although Thailand now has a well-regarded medical image, it still has to develop medical service standards because there are several countries promoting their medical services as a method of encouraging tourists to visit their countries. Medical tourism is a highly competitive industry. Hence, medical service providers should promote Thailand as a destination for relaxation and low-risk country for medical service, emphasising on the high level of professionalism in doctors and staff, the high standards of facilities such as comfortable accommodation and transportation, and its reasonable prices.

Limitations and Future Studies

As with any research, this study contains some limitations that should be considered in future research. First, the majority of the respondents were females. The medical services do not show the large amount of cosmetic surgery for women. Therefore, the next study should collect data from female respondents to understand their perception and requirements for specific types of medical healthcare. Second, the age of respondents should be studied in depth. There would be different requirements for people of different ages. The factors that concern young people may differ from the elderly or the retirees. Third, some tourists visit Thailand on long-stay vacations and may need different kinds of medical treatment packages. Future research should also collect data from niche travellers in order to get information to serve them, for instance, tourists from the Middle East, India, China, or even South America. Moreover, further research can be done to develop a model from the perceived medical service image, perceived medical service value, and perceive medical risks to test the relationship among those variables with customer satisfaction and their willingness to revisit.
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References


Research Paper

Navigations: Enhancing Qualitative Hospitality and Tourism Research Outcomes in Pacific Island Countries

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Abstract: Traditional open-ocean navigation practices predicated on catalysing inputs from the external environment have produced nuanced knowledge of Pacific Island phenomena that modern navigational practices predicated on internal mechanics and technology could not. This paper explains how applying this principle can help improve the qualitative research process when investigating hospitality and tourism phenomena in Pacific Island countries (PICs). Specifically, using a recent research project as a platform, this paper outlines how the epistemology of engaged scholarship and methodological tactics of heuristic devices for collecting data in the field can be operationalised in practice to enhance qualitative hospitality and tourism research in PICs. Navigating the research process using externally-oriented epistemological and methodological approaches can support the advancement of knowledge which more accurately accounts for the idiosyncratic nature of hospitality and tourism in this important yet still misunderstood part of the world.

Keywords: Engaged scholarship, hospitality, Pacific Island countries, qualitative research, tourism


Introduction

In 1976, the traditional sailing canoe Hokule’a arrived in Tahiti after a 3,000 mile voyage from Hawaii. Hokule’a is the Hawaiian name for Arcturus, a guiding star used by Pacific open-ocean navigators (Finney, 1979). The journey of the Hokule’a was unique in that it was accomplished without the aid of modern navigation...
instruments, the first such voyage between the two island groups in 500 years (Finney, 1979). Guiding the *Hokule'a* was Mau Piailug (1932–2010), master of traditional open-ocean navigation from the island of Satawal in the western edge of the Pacific region of Micronesia (East-West Center, 2010). A far cry from modern global positioning systems or even a simple magnetic compass, traditional navigation involves an esoteric process of catalysing information from the external environment (i.e. sun, wind, clouds, currents, stars, waves, sea life, etc.) to journey from origin point to final destination (Finney, 1979).

The journey of the *Hokule'a* had significant anthropological, historical, scientific, and cultural implications for the Pacific region (Low, 2013). Specifically, Mau Piailug and the *Hokule'a* demonstrated how information from the external environment, as opposed to aimless drifting or luck, was skillfully synthesised and utilised by island navigators of the past to navigate vast swaths of the Pacific Ocean and populate its islands (East-West Center, 2010). The awakening to Pacific seafaring traditions that followed in the wake of the *Hokule'a*’s maiden journey served to challenge previous theories which undermined the historical navigation capabilities of islanders, thus inspiring a renaissance of cultural pride, heritage, and traditional practices in Hawaii, and throughout the Pacific region more broadly (Low, 2013).

What might all this have to do with enhancing the outcomes of qualitative hospitality and tourism research in Pacific Island countries (PICs)? As with traditional voyaging, the ability to execute qualitative research which elucidates the nuances and idiosyncrasies of hospitality and tourism phenomena in PICs represents a significant navigational challenge for researchers (Solomona & Davis, 2012). This is particularly true when using standardised epistemological and methodological practices which overly rely on internal mechanics and modern technology. Instead, to complete a meaningful journey from origin point (i.e. research question) to destination (i.e. research outcome), this paper suggests that qualitative researchers in PICs can learn from the traditional navigation practices of the *Hokule'a*. Specifically, qualitative research which uses the process of *sensitising to, engaging with, and synthesising multiple (often subtle) inputs from the external environment* as the basis of its epistemological and methodological practices can facilitate more accurate insights into hospitality and tourism phenomena in PICs.

More accurate insights are essential for developing revitalised theoretical perspectives in Pacific hospitality and tourism, in that existing theory in these fields has largely been “conceived and reconceived in the sociocultural particularities of Euro-American societies” (Winter, 2009, p. 23). This theoretical insularity has resulted in a historical pattern of theorising that does not account for the sociocultural complexities and alternative performance metrics that characterise business-related activity like hospitality and tourism in PICs (Hezel, 2013). Thus, as with the paradigm-altering outcomes of the *Hokule'a* journey, qualitative research that uses
externally-oriented and contextually-relevant epistemological and methodological practices can reshape existing knowledge paradigms in PICs.

In light of these challenges and opportunities, this paper explains how employing the principles of engaged scholarship (Van de Ven, 2007) and heuristic devices for collecting data in the field (Fontana & Frey, 2000) can be utilised to more meaningfully navigate the qualitative research process in PICs. This is accomplished using a recent research experience in the Pacific region of Micronesia as a platform to illustrate how each can be operationalised in practice. The resulting discussion has implications for those interested in conducting innovative and impactful hospitality and tourism research in this little understood part of the world.

Hospitality and Tourism in PICs

Significance and Recent Trends

Varying attempts to drive economic activity have been pursued in PICs, including agricultural exports, mining, manufacturing, internet domain name licensing, offshore banking, aquaculture, logging, and fisheries. However, the combination of high costs, diseconomies of scale, small domestic markets, limited resource endowments, and vulnerability to external shocks has subjected these economic activities to an inherent disadvantage (Knapman, 1994). Despite lacking many of the resources traditionally utilised in international trade, PICs are thought to have the important intrinsic resources for developing hospitality and tourism industries (Harrison, 2003). Specifically, attractive social, cultural, and environmental resources are plentiful in many tropical islands and can be valued at a premium in hospitality and tourism (Mihalic, 2002). Thus, tourism is considered by many to be the most conceivable driving force behind future job creation, economic growth, and sustainable development in PICs (Hezel, 2012).

Over the past 30 years, the greater East Asia-Pacific region has been the fastest growing region for international tourism, with arrivals expected to reach 397 million by 2020 (UNWTO, 2012). Despite this upward trend, tourism growth in the region's PICs has collectively been more modest at roughly 2% annually since 1995, and is projected to remain between 2–3% annually through 2030 (UNWTO, 2012). In recent years, the Pacific Islands (including Australia and New Zealand) have accounted for roughly 5% of the East Asia-Pacific region's 248 million annual international tourist arrivals, and generated total annual tourism receipts of approximately $42.5 billion (UNWTO, 2014). Factoring out the contributions of Australia and New Zealand, reduces these totals significantly. However, while the economic impact of tourism in PICs may be considered relatively insignificant on a global scale, it is the only economic activity characterised by a theoretical comparative advantage in many PICs (Connell, 2007). Thus, on a local scale, the importance of hospitality and tourism is substantial.
**Research Landscape**

There is a dearth of knowledge on the idiosyncrasies of business management and development in PICs in general, and related to hospitality and tourism in particular (Hall, 2010). Previous research suggests the distinctive nature of business and tourism development in PICs is recalcitrant to mainstream theory (Cahn, 2008; Choy, 1992; Curry, 1999), and that doing business in PICs requires the utilisation of unique approaches and models (Cheshire, 2010; Saffu, 2003; Solomona & Davis, 2012). For example, Cheshire (2001) observed that the business models advocated for in PICs are imported from environments where these problems do not exist, and are therefore not amenable for use in these islands. Consequently, individuals and organisations must either rely on materials with limited relevance to the contextual reality, or trial-by-fire approaches which can often be non-productive at best, and detrimental to the overall economic, sociocultural, and environmental landscape at worst. Until contextually-relevant knowledge is systematically developed, research and practice in this area will either remain atheoretical, or rely on imported theories/models not well suited to PICs.

**Enhancing Qualitative Hospitality and Tourism Research Outcomes in PICs**

Qualitative research involving on-location fieldwork is important to developing in-depth understandings around economic activity such as hospitality and tourism in PICs (Duncan, Codippily, Duituturaga & Bulatale, 2014). That said, conducting this brand of research demands substantial amounts of time, energy, and often financial resources. When viewed within the present “audit culture” (Fennell, 2013) of hospitality and tourism, this renders undertaking a qualitative research project in PICs a daunting proposition. This is further exacerbated by the difficulties of developing research questions and design which accurately reflect the relevant hospitality and tourism issues in Pacific Island societies, and then effectively execute interview-based data collection. The remainder of this paper will use a recent qualitative research project in Micronesia as a vehicle for discussing how the principles of engaged scholarship (Van de Ven, 2007) and heuristic devices for collecting data in the field (Fontana & Frey, 2000) can be utilised in practice to help overcome these challenges and enhance qualitative research outcomes in PICs.

**Overview of the Original Research**

In this present paper which is focused on epistemology and methodology, an abridged summary of the results of the original research from which the present findings and discussion are derived are reported here (full results forthcoming elsewhere). To summarise, the original research investigated how foreign-local hotel business arrangements navigate the complex industry and institutional environment in the
Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), a PIC that is attempting to develop tourism to drive increased economic self-reliance. The Glaserian (1978) variant of grounded theory method (GTM) was used as the research methodology, and data were collected via 48 semi-structured interviews with hotel operators and other relevant subjects via on-location fieldwork.

As opposed to the standardised business development models predicated on institutional reform to facilitate increased levels of foreign-local business in hospitality and tourism, the findings of the original research provide theoretical insights on how foreign-local hotel business arrangements can effectively work within the constraints of the institutional environment. To summarise, the grounded theoretical perspective articulates how when the right foreign and local hotel entrepreneurs come together to form the right integrated arrangement through the right processes, the notoriously high transaction costs associated with foreign-local hotel business arrangements in the FSM can be significantly reduced.

**Engaged Scholarship: In Principle and Practice**

*The Theory-Practice Gap*

Conducting innovative research in hospitality and tourism involves understanding how research is conducted is as important as what is researched (Ren, Pritchard & Morgan, 2010). To this end, the original research used as the basis for the present analysis utilised the engaged scholarship (ES) approach to social science research as its epistemological foundation. ES embraces the idea that complex issues can be best framed and investigated by leveraging the insights of various stakeholders throughout all stages of the research process. This increased interaction between researchers and stakeholders can facilitate the development of more penetrating research questions, and generate richer insights for problem-solving than when these parties work separately. In this way, ES is aimed at reducing theory-practice gaps in substantive areas via increased cooperation in the knowledge production process (Van de Ven, 2007).

Van de Ven (2007) discusses three ways in which theory-practice gaps have been framed. The first is a knowledge transfer problem, which suggests a communication boundary between researchers and practitioners that often prevents proper transmission and interpretation of knowledge. In tourism, this knowledge transfer difficulty has been attributed to “the differing cultures of researchers and practitioners” (Cooper, 2006, p. 59). The second relates to the distinct forms of knowledge used by researchers and practitioners. While researchers typically rely on “scientific” knowledge stemming from the development and testing of theory, the knowledge of practitioners is based less on theory and more on that gained through actual experience. The epistemology of ES posits that these forms of
knowledge should ideally be combined in a complimentary fashion, an idea that has also received support in the tourism literature (Stumpf, Sandstrom & Swanger, 2016). The third component of the researcher-practitioner gap relates to knowledge production. Researchers often develop research questions and conduct research either alone, or in collaboration with other scholars. For tourism and hospitality research, the result is often research that may not be fully grounded in reality (Ren et al., 2010). Thus, researchers should pursue interactions with practitioners and other stakeholders before, during, and after the research process.

As with ES, the collectivist nature of Pacific Island societies is predicated on a heavy reliance on collaboration and cooperation (Hezel, 2013). At the same time, careful consideration of stakeholders’ perspectives is important when investigating hospitality and tourism phenomena in PICs (Stumpf & Swanger, 2015). As with traditional open-ocean navigation and the Hokule‘a, utilising ES to catalyse information from stakeholders in the external environment represents a contextually-appropriate epistemological foundation for understanding the relevant hospitality and tourism issues in PICs, and then designing research to investigate them in optimal ways. How the ES principles for accomplishing this can be operationalised in practice in PICs are discussed next using the original research in the FSM as an example.

**Bridging the Gap**

In ES, the researcher can advance knowledge on complex issues by engaging with practitioners and stakeholders in problem formulation, theory building, research design, and problem-solving (Van de Ven, 2007). First, problem formulation is the idea that research questions should be grounded in reality, and thus seeking out practitioner input in the initial stage of a study can help develop more relevant research questions. In the initial stage of the example study, input from a range of external individuals with experience relevant to hospitality and tourism in PICs was actively sought to help formulate the central research question. These individuals included academics, entrepreneurs, business development specialists, independent researchers, non-governmental organisations, and other personal contacts in the Pacific region. In certain instances, open-ended questions were posed to help develop a broad perspective on the range of issues that could be considered as part of the problem formulation process. At other points, pre-developed research ideas were presented to knowledgeable individuals in order to garner feedback on their relevance to the FSM and other PICs, and then fine-tuned as needed.

One theme to emerge from this process of engaging with stakeholders was that despite the significant industry and institutional challenges associated with tourism in the FSM, there are many notable examples of hotel businesses which have managed to navigate these challenges over time. However, additional questioning revealed that
exactly how this has been accomplished was not well understood even by those with extensive experience working in the region, and in some cases, even among those with direct experience working with these kinds of hotels. Examination of the extant literature corroborated the knowledge gaps regarding hotel business management in the challenging environments which characterise many developing PICs. Thus, as with traditional open-ocean navigation, only after engaging with and synthesising multiple inputs from the external environment in the problem formulation stage, did the potential utility of a systematic study aimed at developing a theoretical foundation on this topic become apparent.

Next, theory building in ES is the process of creating or elaborating a theory that fits the research question, such that the theory is the “mental image or conceptual framework that is brought to bear on the research problem” (Van de Ven, 2007, p. 19). While the problem formulation stage hinted at the importance of theory development research on the topic, the researcher also wished to apply a meta-theoretical lens to the theory development process (Sarker, Xiao & Beaulieu, 2013). The eventual selection of transaction cost economics (TCE) as the meta-theoretical lens in the present research was not automatic or intuitive. Instead, the potential usefulness of TCE as meta-theory was only identified through months of elaborate communications with a respected Pacific Island business development specialist. By tapping into this individual’s mix of extensive practical experience and theoretical knowledge, the use of TCE as meta-theoretical lens was deemed to have the potential to help fill some important knowledge gaps regarding how to make a hotel business work in Pacific Islands with challenging industry and institutional environments. Therefore, as with traditional open-ocean navigation, the process of engaging with and synthesising external input was once again vital to the theory-building stage of the research.

The ES approach also informs the research design of a study. This stands in contrast to the idea typically held by some scholars that consultation on research design is outside the realm of non-academics’ capabilities. However, an important aspect of the original research was the incorporation of practitioner insights into the research design process, as several individuals provided unsolicited input on the kinds of research most likely to work (and not work) given the practicalities of conducting research in the FSM. Specifically, these individuals provided personal accounts of the limitations of variance research (i.e. regression, analysis of variance, factor analysis, structural equation modelling, etc.) using survey or secondary data in contexts similar to the FSM. Consulting the extant literature supported this idea. For instance, Prasad and Prasad (2002, p. 5) suggested that “conventional quantitative organisational research, notwithstanding its use of increasingly complex statistical techniques, [have] often proved to be somewhat simplistic, ahistorical, decontextualised, reductionist, aphilosophical, and nonreflexive.”

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Given the importance of uncovering the contextual idiosyncrasies of the phenomena under investigation, the use of a standard variance research design was not deemed suitable. Therefore, it was decided that adopting a process approach using a qualitative theory development methodology could be most epistemologically appropriate for uncovering the nuanced business practices required in PICs like the FSM. This was corroborated by the perspective in the extant literature which suggests that interviewing managers is underutilised but potentially very useful for theory building in this area (Tsang, 2006). Thus, the eventual selection of grounded theory method as the research methodology was developed by engaging with and synthesising cues from the external environment, rather than relying simply on technology and/or preconceived internal notions regarding research design.

Finally, problem-solving is the process whereby the knowledge produced through the research is communicated and transferred to those it may affect in the external environment. In the example study, the problem-solving component commenced at the completion of the written research report. Specifically, the researcher adopted an active role in seeking out relevant audiences to engage with, including business and economic development organisations, lending institutions, colleges and universities, and current/prospective hotel entrepreneurs in the FSM. In this sense, the completion of a research project is thought of as the beginning of its life as a tool that can be interpreted, utilised, and elaborated upon by stakeholders with their own unique needs and agendas. Because research findings are often socially constructed (DiMaggio, 1995), this research’s contribution to management science discourse in the Pacific region will largely depend on the extent to which those in the external academic community continually engage with the theoretical insights of the study, as opposed to the extent to which the researcher looks inward to formulate additional implications and applications.

**Heuristic Devices for Data Collection in the Field: In Principle and Practice**

Seeking out and synthesising information from the external environment through ES can help provide a rich epistemological foundation for enhancing qualitative research in PICs. However, just as synthesising information from stars and ocean currents alone does not allow a traditional open-ocean navigator to reach his destination, ES alone does not produce an enhanced research outcome. Rather, the ES epistemological foundation must be coupled with a complementary methodological approach which leverages place-based norms and practices to navigate the qualitative research process in PICs.

In general terms, qualitative investigations aim to “study phenomena and processes in their natural settings, and intend to make sense of those matters in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (Hallberg, 2006, p. 141). Thus, interviews are often utilised as the primary data source for collecting data from subjects on the issues

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relevant to the research question (Walsham, 1995). However, this data collection process is not so straightforward in PICs. While the bedrock of island societies is interpersonal relationships, and thus seemingly conducive to interview research, information is a “precious commodity” in PICs that is not “dispensed carelessly” (Hezel, 2013, p. 63). Combined with the often discrepant cultural and behavioral norms between the researcher and the researched, the ability to collect anything more than superficial interview data in PICs becomes a significant challenge.

Fontana and Frey (2000) pointed out several heuristic devices relevant to conducting interviews in the field which can be particularly useful in helping to effectively navigate research toward enhanced outcomes in PICs, and which were utilised as important components of the methodology in the present research example. These include: gaining access to the setting, understanding the language and culture of participants, and gaining and maintaining trust.

Gaining access to the setting involves a researcher’s ability to immerse oneself in the context of the phenomena under investigation. This includes acceptance from the individuals therein, who often act as gatekeepers to such contexts (Fontana & Frey, 2000). As Hezel (2013, p. 12) pointed out, personalisation is a dominant theme in Pacific Island culture, such that interpersonal linkages and relationships frame the “cultural mindset” from which islanders operate. In Micronesia, the author further stated that socialisation processes are a constant of society, and outsiders (e.g. researchers) are not exempt from these. Thus, the first step to establishing a pattern on communication with islanders conducive to gaining access to the setting is placing oneself on the “social map” of their society, thereby providing some basis for interpersonal connection. As Hezel (2013, p. 15) stated, “being plotted on the social map is a prerequisite for any meaningful exchange with island people”.

In light of this contextual-reality of the task environment, a communication strategy was initiated starting roughly six months prior to the in-country fieldwork of the example study to increase the researcher’s effectiveness in gaining access to the setting. This initially involved sending emails to hotel operators and relevant stakeholders in the FSM. While these emails did provide a brief overview of the research, much more emphasis was placed on the kinds of personalisation and social mapping commensurate with the place-based norms and practices in PICs like the FSM. In particular, much care was given to articulating the researcher’s personal linkages to specific people and places in the FSM that had been established years prior, and which could illustrate the “social chain” (Hezel, 2013, p. 15) between the researcher and prospective subject. After establishing his place on the social map of potential interview subjects, a brief overview of the research was provided and an invitation to participate in the interviews was extended. This resulted in 20 of 25 (80%) hotels contacted providing initial participation consent. Therefore, as opposed to looking inward to what the researcher thinks is an appropriate way to
access interview subjects, researchers must look externally and sensitise oneself to the sociocultural norms and practices in PICs to develop contextually-relevant tactics.

Next, understanding of the language and culture of research subjects is important to reducing misunderstandings and misinterpretations in the data collection and analysis process. When conducting fieldwork in international settings, a lack of understanding on certain sociocultural communication conventions can lead to less than optimal results (Fontana & Frey, 2000). Specific to PICs, researchers relying on qualitative data must recognise how both verbal and non-verbal language act as manifestations of culture in order to effectively navigate the interview process.

In the example research, most local Micronesians are adept in conversational English, and therefore an interpreter was not needed to conduct the interviews. However, communicating effectively in Micronesia requires an ability to recognise spoken language in context, interpret the unspoken, and read often subtle non-verbal cues (Hezel, 2013). As such, in the example study, the researcher remained mindful of proxemic, chronemic, kinesic, and paralinguistic considerations (Fontana & Frey, 2000) to account for the nuances of local communication norms throughout the interview process. For example, Western conversational style tends to be relatively fast-paced and direct, and requires the participants to maintain almost constant eye contact to signal attentiveness and respect. In contrast, Micronesian conversational style tends to be more deliberate and indirect, often requires provision for long pauses, and the use of direct eye contact for sustained periods is considered inappropriate. As the traditional navigator sensitises himself to cues in the environment, qualitative researchers in PICs must sensitise himself to the placed-based communication norms of the participants in his environment rather than retaining an inward focus of intercultural egoism in the interview process.

Gaining and maintaining trust is another vital component of conducting successful interviews (Fontana & Frey, 2000). While various definitions have been proposed, trust can be understood as expectations about the behavior of an individual or entity that are impacted by either enhancing or inhibiting contextual factors (Lewicki & Bunker, 1995). When conducting research in the FSM, non-local researchers must understand some of the historical forces which often serve as inhibiting contextual factors in regard to establishing trust. Like most PICs, the FSM is characterised by a history of external forces including colonial imposition, foreign missionaries, foreign consultants, expectations of growth and development from myriad aid providers, and integration into the ever-converging global political-economic system. As such, external forces have often acted as substantial stressors to island societies, locals have learned to become understandably wary of non-local “professionals” whose motives and agendas may be unclear, and therefore suspect.

While trust can often take months or years to build in Micronesian society (Hezel, 2013), there are tactics researchers can use to gain and maintain a level of
trust conducive to effectively conducting interviews and collecting data. Primary to these is understanding that in PICs like the FSM, sociocultural criteria are generally much more highly regarded than professional criteria in establishing a base level of trust. For example, touting a doctorate from a prominent university can afford one little to no footing with islanders, whereas plotting oneself on a local individual’s social map, and then adhering to sociocultural norms can serve to establish baseline trust. In the example study, the focus of both pre-fieldwork emails and on-location interpersonal interactions was establishing the researcher’s connection to specific people and places in the FSM, and then adhering to sociocultural norms from a behavioral standpoint. Professional credentials were detailed either as an aside, upon request, or not at all. Again, being sensitive to and synthesising place-based practices into the research methodology proved more conducive to establishing the requisite trust for the interview process than preconceived internal ideas about how trust is gained and maintained. Figure 1 illustrates the parallels between the process of traditional open-ocean navigation and enhancing qualitative research outcomes in PICs via the principles of engaged scholarship and heuristic devices for collecting data in the field advocated for here.

Figure 1. Traditional navigation and qualitative research parallels in PICs
Conclusion

Traditional open-ocean navigation in the Pacific involves a specialised process of sensitising to, engaging with, and synthesising multiple (often subtle) inputs from the external environment to reach the final destination. With the maiden voyage of the Hokule’a, the art and science of traditional navigation served to unlock revitalised conceptualisations of Pacific phenomena that the standardised use of modern navigational instruments predicated on internal mechanics and technology could not (Low, 2013). In the same way, this paper suggests that qualitative researchers in PICs can use the traditional navigation principle of sensitising to, engaging with, and synthesising multiple (often subtle) inputs from the external environment to facilitate the development of more accurate and nuanced insights into hospitality and tourism phenomena in PICs.

Using a recent study as a vehicle, this paper outlines how utilising the principles of engaged scholarship (Van de Ven, 2007) as epistemological foundation and heuristic devices for collecting data in the field (Fontana & Frey, 2000) as methodological tactics can operationalise this principle in practice in PICs. These are particularly relevant to the advancement of innovative hospitality and tourism scholarship in PICs in that they both focus less on technology and the internal orientation of the researcher, and more on leveraging contextually-relevant information from the external environment. In ES, this information comes in the form of incorporating stakeholder insights into the problem formulation, theory building, research design, and problem-solving phases to develop more relevant and impactful research. For heuristic devices that collect data in the field, this information comes in the form of leveraging the sociocultural norms and practices in PICs to improve interview data collection outcomes through gaining access to the setting, understanding the language and culture of participants, and gaining and maintaining trust. As detailed next, future research can probe deeper into some of these epistemological and methodological issues to further enhance qualitative hospitality and tourism research outcomes in PICs.

Future Research

Trust in PICs

A researcher’s ability to gain and maintain baseline trust with subjects is a vital component to conducting successful interviews. However, the various historical and sociocultural entanglements that outside researchers must navigate in PICs makes trust difficult to gain, and easy to lose. As previous research points out (Rousseau, Sitkin, Burt & Camerer, 1998; Zaheer & Venkatraman, 1995), the notion of trust is a multifaceted concept that is assigned a variety of meanings. Moreover, there are disparities in how trust is viewed between disciplines (Rousseau et al., 1998).
In economics, trust is treated as a subclass of risk whereby expected net gains and expected net losses are evaluated in a calculative way between transacting parties (Williamson, 1985). In psychology, trust is assessed in more interpersonal ways which consider individual attributes and internal cognitions (Rotter, 1967; Rousseau et al., 1998). In sociology, trust is often treated as more of a social phenomenon embedded in personal relationships and social networks (Lewis & Weigert, 1985; Granovetter, 1985; Rousseau et al., 1998). There have also been various dimensions of trust identified within disciplines. In sociology, for example, distinctions have been made between characteristic-based trust (formed in groups and based on human characteristics), process-based trust (formed during exchanges), and institutional-based trust (embedded in social phenomenon)(Zaheer & Venkatraman, 1995; Zucker, 1986). The psychology literature conceptualises trust as multidimensional, with distinct cognitive (knowledge), affective (emotional), and behavioral (action) dimensions (Lewis & Weigert, 1985).

In addition, there are cross-cultural differences in trust propensities and behaviors. For example, Yuki, Maddux, Brewer, and Takemura (2005) studied trust behaviors in Western and Eastern cultures, finding that individuals from Western cultures exhibited a depersonalised form of trust based on in-group and out-group membership. Conversely, those from Eastern cultures tended to trust on relationship-based and social network-based processes. The islands of Micronesia exhibit idiosyncratic sociocultural characteristics, and have been subject to substantial levels of both Western and Eastern influence (Crocombe, 2007; Hanlon, 1998). While various accounts of the social systems and cultural practices in various Micronesian islands have been offered (Caughey, 1977; Hezel, 2013; Labby, 1976; Lingenfelter, 1975; Peoples, 1985; Peterson, 1982; Riesenberg, 1968), there is a dearth of research on trust behaviors in the FSM and PICs like it. As such, there is a need for future research on the processes through which trust is formed and maintained in PICs, the specific trust behaviors of individuals, and also the outcomes of trust in Pacific Island society. Given the important role of trust in qualitative research, innovative studies in this area should help promote improved research outcomes in PICs for the future.

**Knowledge Transfer in PICs**

The management and transfer of knowledge in hospitality and tourism has been discussed and debated over the past decade (Cooper, 2006; Hallin & Marnburg, 2008; Hjalager, 2002). In addition to the difficulties of facilitating intra- and inter-organisational knowledge flows (Hallin & Marnburg, 2008), the ES approach suggests that gaps between theoretical and practical knowledge stem from a communication boundary between researchers and practitioners that often prevents proper transmission and interpretation of knowledge (Van de Ven, 2007). Bridging
the gap can therefore be helped through greater engagement in the problem-solving stage of research, whereby the knowledge produced through the research is communicated and transferred to those it may affect. In that research findings are at least in part socially constructed (DiMaggio, 1995), future qualitative research in hospitality and tourism in PICs is dependent upon greater engagement in the problem-solving process from both researchers and stakeholders.

However, there are fundamental differences between PICs and Western societies, for example, regarding how information is both viewed and shared. For instance, while Westerners may view the resulting information of research as a commodity that can be shared liberally, in many Pacific Island cultures, information is treated as a coveted possession that individuals can conceal and then convert into social capital when the time arises (Hezel, 2013). As such, there is much to be learned about reconciling these fundamental cultural differences in order to foster more effective knowledge transfer in the problem-solving aspect of ES research. Future research on the nuances of the social construction of knowledge in PICs can not only help bridge theory-practice gaps in hospitality and tourism (Cooper, 2006; Hallin & Marnburg, 2008), but can also help PICs successfully leverage this knowledge to develop more socially, environmentally, and economically viable hospitality and tourism industries for the future.

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Review Paper

Integrated Resorts and Tourism: A Singapore Perspective

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Abstract: There has been growing interest on the part of government and industry around the world in integrated resorts where casinos are one part of larger visitor attractions. This paper discusses the case of Singapore within the context of wider trends. The city state has two such complexes which opened in 2010 and a review of their performance suggests some financial success, but also existing and future challenges to surmount. Although there is evidence of an initial boost to international arrivals, this appears to have diminished and there is uncertainty about longer term effects on tourism. Despite possible shortcomings, the Singapore model merits examination and yields insights and lessons of more general applicability.

Keywords: Casinos, integrated resorts, Singapore, tourism


Introduction

This paper deals with the experience of Singapore, the prosperous city state at the southernmost tip of the Malayan Peninsula in South East Asia, which legalised casino gambling in 2006. Two casinos were subsequently licensed on condition that they would be incorporated into separate large and expensive leisure complexes, termed integrated resorts (IRs), a move reflecting a wider trend in the evolution of casino resorts. The Singapore IRs opened in 2010 and were intended to help revitalise the tourism industry and reposition Singapore as a destination. A review is timely after over five years and affords insights into their setting up, operation to date and lessons to be learned.

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In this paper, the characteristics of IRs, and their growing popularity around the world are first considered. Following from this is an account of the background to the policy change by the Singapore government and the form and regulation of the new resorts. Their function and performance as tourist attractions are then examined and attention is given to their various impacts before a conclusion which summarises achievements to date and challenges ahead. While the Singapore model of casino resort development and oversight exhibits several strengths, there are shortcomings and some uncertainty about future returns. It thus warrants further study in order to improve understanding of the relationship between tourism and IRs and the factors which will determine the success of the latest generation of the latter.

A case study approach was selected as most suitable for the purpose as it is a methodology which can assist in appreciating and explaining contemporary realities, contextualising situations and acknowledging complexities (Flyvberg, 2006; Stake, 2005; Yin, 2014). Findings are derived from secondary data gathered from online and print sources. Academic literature, media reporting and official and corporate websites were all consulted and factual details were validated by triangulation where possible. It should be noted that it is difficult to comment on some commercial matters pertaining to Singapore IRs because of restrictions on the financial and other statistics released by private and public stakeholders. Limitations due to the absence of primary data are also recognised, but information of sufficient quantity and quality has been amassed to complete the exercise in a satisfactory manner.

Integrated Resorts, Casinos and Tourism

There are definitional ambiguities about the term integrated resort which has been in use for some time (Stanton & Aislabie, 1992). Writing about integrated beach resorts, Smith (1992, p. 211) defines them as “planned environments with a number of hotels which share infrastructure, recreational features and other facilities”. However, the size and degree to which resorts are self-contained as well as ownership and management vary and the term resort hotel (itself subject to interpretation) is often more apt. Recently and as in Singapore, the IR label is being applied to leisure complexes in which casino gambling is one component of a mix of entertainments, amenities and accommodation (MacDonald & Eadington, 2008; Uy, 2014). Integrated casino resort might therefore be a better description, although the implication that casinos dominate the site and gambling is a motivation for all visitors may be misleading.

While employment of IR terminology by the casino industry may be relatively novel, the concept is not new. Its origin can be discerned in the modern idea of a casino resort which according to MacDonald and Eadington (2008) dates from 1966 when Caesars Palace opened in the USA. This innovation can be seen as an effort to endow the gambling industry with greater social and political acceptability, alongside the pursuit of new commercial opportunities such as the family market.
Nevertheless, while taking up only a small percentage of the space, casinos are primary income earners and profits can sustain non-gaming elements which would otherwise not be viable. Without the casino, it may be impossible to secure developer interest and private financing for large scale projects which require multi-billion-dollar funding. The IRs can be distinguished from settlements where the economy is dominated by casinos such as Las Vegas (Schwarz, 2003) and Macau (Zheng, 2004) which have been widely studied, yet, they share attributes of these casino cities which Hannigan describes as global models of “urban development and consumer culture”. Both represent a convergence of the “luxury goods and service industry, the corporate gambling sector and the international tourist trade” (2007, p. 959).

There is evidence of an increase in the number of casinos worldwide (World Casino Directory, 2016), including casino resorts with non-gaming elements (YWS, 2015), but comprehensive data about IRs globally are not available. More popular tourist destinations appear to be expressing interest in IRs, examples being Cyprus (Republic of Cyprus, 2015) and Jamaica (“A new 2000”, 2016), although their ambitious plans may not become realities. In the USA, MGM Resorts International is constructing Maryland’s sixth casino and Wynn Everett at Boston Harbor is set to open in 2017. The Genting Group’s Resorts World Las Vegas will have a Chinese theme, incorporating a panda habitat, and is scheduled for completion in 2018 (“Major casino developments”, 2016). Several countries in Asia are actively pursuing IR development, reflecting official support for private investment in the casino sector (Casino City, 2016; Chi, 2014; Henderson, 2006; Hsu, 2006). Heavy demand from Mainland China has been a factor in shaping distribution, a predilection for betting agreed to be prevalent among the Chinese (Binde, 2005; Chien & Hsu, 2006). Rules preventing their citizens from patronising casinos are also being relaxed in states such as South Korea and Vietnam, thereby extending the market.

Macau remains pre-eminent and 2015 saw the opening of the Hollywood-inspired Studio City Macau and Lisboa Palace is scheduled for completion in 2017. The City of Dreams Manila opened in late 2014 in the Philippines’s capital which is already home to Resorts World Manila. The Genting Group is a partner in an IR in South Korea scheduled to launch in 2017 and openings are possible in Japan (Fitch Ratings, 2015) despite delays in the enabling legislation. Another casino resort is under construction in the Russian Far East at Vladivostok. Analysts have spoken of at least 17 projects “coming online” in Asia Pacific by 2020 (Leong, 2015a), including Australia where there has been an upsurge in activity exemplified by the State of Queensland which has approved three licences for IRs in Brisbane, Cairns and the Gold Coast (Queensland Government, 2016). The Aquis Great Barrier Reef Resort is designed to have an environmental conservation and management precinct dedicated to the protection of the resort environment (“Major casino developments”, 2016).
Several of these latest IRs form a distinct group characterised by their grand size and scale, heavy costs, involvement of leading companies, striking architectural design, retail and dining lifestyle offerings and leisure attractions which can encompass culture and nature as well as modern entertainments. They are portrayed as destinations in themselves, yet actual and potential contributions to tourism are disputed; the debate echoes a longer standing one about casinos (Back & Bowen, 2009; Smith & Hinch, 1996) and their capacity to draw visitors and spending. In terms of casinos, many gambling markets are predominantly local (MacDonald & Eadington, 2008) and a reliance on domestic customers means a recycling of existing money rather than fresh injections from outside (Beeton & Pinge, 2003). Crimes, often of an organised sort, are linked to casinos (Chhabra, 2007; Pizam & Pokela, 1985) and it may be inappropriate for poorer countries to be channelling scarce resources into such facilities which their citizens cannot afford (Wellings & Crush, 1983). On the other hand, advocates highlight the economic benefits of income and employment creation and greater taxation revenues (Alexander & Paterline, 2005). Financial rewards are enhanced by the multiplier effects of a corresponding expansion in tourism, and casino resorts are seen as a catalyst for development and renewal in the destination areas (Stansfield, 1978).

The fiercest criticisms of casinos, whether integrated into resorts or not, is connected to the personal and social costs of pathological or compulsive gambling (Ladoucer, 2002). This can destroy the lives of individuals and their families and treatment and support services are a hidden expense. The corporate gambling industry has responded by devising so-called responsible gaming policies (Chen McCain, Tsai & Bellino, 2009), but there is a fundamental conflict between profit maximisation through higher volumes and restricting attendance to contain exploitation of the vulnerable. Possible drawbacks underlie reservations about casinos among the people and organisations at places where they are planned (Kang, Long, & Perdue, 1996; Lee & Back, 2003 and 2006). Certain concerns may be mitigated in the instance of IRs which have a range of amenities for customers besides betting and gamblers. They can extend leisure options for residents and possibly be an instrument for environmental improvement (Wu and Chen, 2015), but opposition to the gambling constituent cannot be overlooked. The Singapore government has attempted to address these issues and its actions have been watched closely by industry observers, perhaps informing and inspiring subsequent IR proposals. The approach followed is discussed in the next section which focuses on key areas of formal control and regulation.

**Singapore’s Integrated Resorts: Setting Up and Regulation**

Singapore’s IRs owe their existence to the government reversal of the ban on casinos, in force since full independence in 1965 and motivated by the desire to protect its citizens (almost 75% of whom are ethnic Chinese) from the damage attendant
on excessive gambling. Mention was first made in Parliament in early 2004 that the position was under review and, after consideration encompassing fact finding missions abroad and public consultation, it was decided to proceed with two IRs. Bids were invited for one oriented towards leisure tourists on the small offshore island of Sentosa, joined by road to the main island and given over to recreation, and another aimed at the business market and located at the new Marina Bay downtown area on reclaimed land. The aforementioned Malaysian Genting Group conglomerate which has interests in casinos and resorts in Australia, the Bahamas, Malaysia, the Philippines, the USA and the UK was chosen in the first instance. Resorts World Sentosa (RWS) cost S$7 (US$5.1) billion and opened in January 2010 on a 49-hectare site. The well-known American firm of Michael Graves worked with local architects on the design. Las Vegas Sands Corporation which has four properties in the USA and four in Macao through its majority-owned Sands China Limited was the other successful bidder. Marina Bay Sands (MBS) was designed by the renowned America-based architect Moshe Safdie and occupies 15.5 hectares of land. It opened in April 2010 after investment, including land costs, of US$5.7 billion (Henderson, 2012).

The rationale for the policy shift was economic and related to Singapore’s maturing tourism industry, expressed in statements about losing tourists to rival destinations believed to be livelier with more things to see and do. It was therefore imperative to invest in facilities which would help promote an image of sophistication, vibrancy and dynamism (Lee, 2005). Such features were also perceived as essential to membership of the global city elite which Singapore aspired to join (Bullock, 2014). The IRs would facilitate realisation of targets of 17 million international visitors and spending of S$30 (US$22) billion by 2015 (STB, 2005). Employment would be created and some of the money gambled by Singaporeans overseas, calculated to be between S$1 million (US$734,000) and S$2 (US$1.5) million annually (Tan, 2014), would be retained. While there was appreciation of the economic arguments in favour of reversing the ban on casinos, there was anxiety in official circles and among the public about the gambling threats to society and moral values. Critics complained that casinos were associated with crime in ways which could tarnish Singapore’s reputation for safety, security and lack of corruption and that promised monetary yields were not guaranteed (Henderson, 2007).

Acknowledgement of the chance of undesirable outcomes underlies the regulatory machinery installed as part of a national framework. A National Council on Problem Gambling was formed in 2005 and now reports to the Ministry of Social and Family Development. Main roles are to foster public awareness, promote responsible gambling, undertake research and help problem gamblers. It also cooperates in dealing with social safeguards and a system of exclusions which can be initiated by individuals or families (National Council on Problem Gambling, 2016). The Casino Regulatory Authority
(CRA) was established via the 2006 Casino Control Act (Republic of Singapore, 2006) and has a mission of ensuring that casino management and operation is “free from criminal influence”, gambling is “conducted honestly” and the “potential harms” are contained through the implementation of social safeguards to keep “vulnerable groups” out of the casinos (Casino Regulatory Authority, 2015, p. 4). The CRA regulates and licenses operators and imposes penalties for breaches, collaborating with the Casino Crime Investigation Branch which is a Specialised Crime Division of the Singapore Police Force.

The 2006 legislation covered protective steps such as the S$100 (US$73) daily entrance fee and S$2,000 (US$1,470) annual membership fees for Singaporean citizens and Permanent Residents (PRs), denial of entry to those under 21 and prohibition of automated teller machines within the casinos. Casinos and junket operators are also not allowed to extend credit to Singaporeans and PRs unless they open a casino deposit account of at least S$100,000 (US$73,400) and thus qualify as premium players. Junket organisers often lend to the gamblers whose trips they arrange and receive payment from the casino proportionate to the bets made. They too are subject to licensing, taxation and overseeing by the CRA to try and thwart the money laundering which can accompany their transactions. There are only three in Singapore where they are known as International Market Agents (Lau & Wong, 2014) compared to over 200 in Macau (Tan, 2014).

The IR casinos have been closely monitored and a review of the Casino Control Act in 2012 led to a tightening of regulations, significantly increasing the maximum fine for serious violations. Amendments were made to the Act in 2014 to bolster “due diligence measures to combat money laundering and terrorism financing” (Republic of Singapore, 2014). Measures against casino advertising to locals have also been made stricter, an official stating that the “casinos are meant to be tourist products and should remain so. We are prepared to strengthen social safeguards as and when necessary to ensure that there is no targeting of our domestic market” (Chun, 2011). Licences are renewed every three years and extra conditions may be introduced, depending upon compliance record (Lin, 2013). The 10-year moratorium on licences for new casinos expired at the end of 2015 and a third is unlikely, the policy seemingly being to work with current operators to improve offerings and maintain their international competitiveness (Leong, 2015a).

The Integrated Resorts and Tourism

From the beginning, the Singapore government has stressed that the IRs are not confined to gambling with regard to their business operations and the visitor experience. They are intended to act as tourist attractions with broad appeal and casino restrictions are partly to ensure that sufficient attention is given to other components. For example, MBS contains three 55-storey hotel towers, joined by a
rooftop SkyPark, providing 2,561 luxury rooms and suites. An Expo and Convention Centre with 1.3 million square feet of space can handle 45,000 delegates. The Shoppes boasts nearly 800,000 square feet of retailing, in which luxury brands are showcased, in addition to 60 dining outlets including several celebrity chef restaurants. Other amenities are a 50,000 square foot ArtScience Museum, two theatres which have a total of 4,000 seats and an outdoor events plaza (Marina Bay Sands, 2016a). The casino, taking up less than 3% of the gross floor area, offers 20 different games and has more than 350 games tables and 2,300 slot machines and electronic table games combined (Marina Bay Sands, 2016b). At RWS, there are five hotels with about 1,600 rooms and three other types of accommodation as well as a spa. It too has around 60 food and beverage outlets, among them celebrity chef restaurants. There are over 30 retail outlets and 30,000 square feet of “luxury retail space” in addition to a Convention Centre which can hold around 6,000. RWS is home to the region’s first and only Universal Studios theme park, a Marine Life Park with an aquarium and waterpark, and a museum. The casino covers around 5% of floor space and has more than 500 tables and 2,400 slot machines and electronic table games machines (Resorts World Sentosa, 2016a).

The mix of products and services allows the IRs to appeal to various types of visitors and helps maximise non-gambling earnings. It has been estimated that nearly 25% of total revenue in 2013 came from sources such as hotels, retailing and meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions (MICE). MBS tends to have higher accommodation occupancy rates and prices than RWS and hotels made up nearly half of the former’s US$804.7 million non-gambling revenue in 2013. RWS did not release a breakdown of its non-gaming revenue of US$523.3 million for that year, but paid attractions are likely to have been of commercial importance, especially Universal Studios which drew 15 million visitors between March 2010 when it opened and August 2014 (Cohen, 2014). Room supply for RWS was augmented in 2015 by a new Genting hotel in Jurong, a satellite town on the main island slated for further development as a business and lifestyle hub, with a 24-hour shuttle bus linking it to Sentosa.

The allure for tourists of the IRs as a whole and the casinos specifically are topics which are yet to be thoroughly explored. Data in Table 1 suggests an immediate and very marked upturn in tourism volume and value triggered by the resorts. However, the pace of growth has stalled subsequently and there was a fall in arrivals in 2014 which was offset by a rise in average spending to leave receipts unchanged from 2013. There was a slight recovery in 2015, but a decline in receipts blamed on fewer business and MICE visitors. Such a pattern is also discernible in arrivals from the major market of Mainland China which are listed in Table 2, although its growth was significantly above average in 2011-2013 while the drop of 24% in 2014 rendered it the worst performing market. Other leading generators are Malaysia and Indonesia,
international statistics for the former excluding the many Malaysians arriving by land. These markets too grew by 32% (Indonesia) and 36% (Malaysia) in 2010 and again by 12% and 10%, respectively in 2011 before slowing down in accordance with general trends. Indeed, Asia outperformed other regions with increases of almost 26% in 2010 and 16% in 2011 compared with 12.2% and 7.9% for the Americas and 5% and 2% for Europe, respectively (STB, 2016a).

Table 1. Singapore international tourist arrivals and receipts, 2009-2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Arrivals (millions)</th>
<th>Year-on-Year Growth (%)</th>
<th>Receipts S$ billion (US$)</th>
<th>Year-on-Year Growth (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>-4.3</td>
<td>12.8 (9.4)</td>
<td>-15.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>11.6</td>
<td>+20.2</td>
<td>18.9 (13.9)</td>
<td>+49.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>+13.1</td>
<td>22.3 (16.4)</td>
<td>+17.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>14.5</td>
<td>+10.1</td>
<td>23.1 (16.9)</td>
<td>+5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>15.6</td>
<td>+7.4</td>
<td>23.5 (17.3)</td>
<td>+1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>15.1</td>
<td>-3.1</td>
<td>23.5 (17.3)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>15.2</td>
<td>+0.9</td>
<td>22 (16)</td>
<td>-6.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: STB, 2016a.

Table 2. Singapore arrivals from Mainland China, 2009-2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Arrivals</th>
<th>Year-on-Year Growth (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>936,747</td>
<td>-13.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>1,171,337</td>
<td>+25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>1,577,522</td>
<td>+34.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>2,034,177</td>
<td>+29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>2,269,870</td>
<td>+11.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>1,721,565</td>
<td>-24.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>2,106,164</td>
<td>+22.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: STB, 2016a.

Many of these tourists will have visited the IRs and officials assert that they account for the majority of casino patrons (Tan, 2015), but details about the profile of visitors to these resorts and users of different services are not available. Reporting of international tourist spending by category has been revised and gambling only identified since 2013 when it was combined with sightseeing and entertainment. The collective share of total receipts was 23% that year (STB, 2014) and reached 25% in 2015. This category was excluded from the analyses of country expenditure for
stated reasons of commercial sensitivity (STB, 2015), although Mainland Chinese were believed to be responsible for half of annual gaming receipts (“Marina Bay Sands”, 2015).

Published statistics can be interpreted as evidence of an IR stimulating effect on inbound tourism, albeit with differences depending on region and country of origin, which have not been sustained. However, tourism flows are vulnerable to economic, social and political events in addition to commercial developments. Many influences are at work and any changes in Singapore’s tourist arrivals cannot be attributed to the IRs alone. For example, the sharp fall in Mainland Chinese visitors in 2014 was explained by the country’s new 112-article Tourism Law which includes closer supervision of tour operators and travel agents with a view to curtailing bad practices (CNTA, 2013). Reaction to aviation accidents involving the Malaysian national carrier (MH370 and MH17) and regional political events were other contributory factors as Singapore is regularly packaged with selected South East Asian countries. Chinese tourists returned in 2015 when there were more flights to secondary cities, but their average spending shrank by 5%. Unfavourable currency exchange rates have also discouraged Indonesian and Malaysian visitors and casino customers were restricted to Chinese and other minority communities as Muslims are prohibited by Islam from gambling. It is also important to recall that some of the expansion in 2010 could be explained by recovery from the contraction in 2008-2009 precipitated by the global financial crisis.

At the same time, the ability of the new attractions to encourage tourism in general and Chinese inbound travel in particular should be recognised (Mintel, 2013). Numbers of domestic tourists are not measured and demand is agreed to be constrained by the size of Singapore and ease of access to better endowed neighbouring destinations, but it seems likely that a small proportion of residents will stay overnight at the IRs and a much larger proportion will patronise other leisure amenities. Favourable consequences for image building and branding must also be acknowledged and Singapore has acquired arresting structures which house celebrity chef restaurants of international repute, luxury retailers and fashionable nightclubs as well as a famous theme park. MBS is hailed as an iconic building and part of a skyline which is a dramatic backdrop when illuminated for events such as the Formula 1 Grand Prix, the first such night race. The IRs have been used by marketers to help reposition the city state as a sophisticated destination for the 21st century in ways which are apparent in their portrayals in official materials (STB, 2016b). They thus serve as a government tool in the constant process of reinventing and remaking Singapore as a centre for tourism and other economic activities which is deemed vital to its survival (Bullock, 2014). However, an assessment of the IRs’ role must also give due attention to wider repercussions which are examined in the next section.
Impacts of the Integrated Resorts

It is perhaps necessary to distinguish between the IRs as a whole and the casino component in any discussion of impacts given the controversial aspects of the latter. With regard to the IRs, their income generating capabilities can be inferred from the financial figures to which reference has already been made. In addition to the initial foreign direct investment and new business for the local construction industry, RWS has provided employment for over 12,500 and MBS for 9,400, whom the companies assert are mainly locals. There are indirect and induced economic benefits and multiplier effects. MBS stated it procured US$590 million in goods and services in 2014, 90% from local businesses while 90% of RWS contracts were said to be with Singaporean small and medium enterprises (Tan, 2015). The fillip to Singapore’s tourism and enhanced image noted previously have also had positive outcomes for the economy. According to the Ministry of Trade and Industry, the IRs account for between 1.5% and 2% of Singapore’s annual Gross Domestic Product (Leong, 2015a) while the Finance Ministry calculates that they paid around 3% of the total taxes levied in the 2010 financial year (IRAS, 2011).

Non-gambling earnings mentioned earlier should not be overlooked, but are overshadowed by those from gambling and gross revenues in 2013, making the Singapore casino sector one of the most profitable in the world after Macau and Las Vegas (Casino Regulatory Authority, 2014). However, annual gambling revenues have been somewhat volatile. Amounts flattened after peaking at over US$4.5 billion in 2011, up from US$2.8 billion in 2010, before recovering to US$4.6 billion in 2014 (“Singapore: Gross”, 2015; UNLV Center for Gaming Research, 2016). Earnings then fell in 2015 due to the shrinking VIP market, slowing economies in China and Singapore and weakening Malaysian and Indonesian currencies (Leong, 2015b). Demand from Mainland China was further depressed by the clampdown on overseas gambling in an anti-corruption campaign (“China clamps down”, 2015) and securing debt payments from this group can be difficult. Genting Singapore posted a net profit of S$75.2 (US$54.7) million, a drop of 85% over 2014, and an increase in bad debts from S$262 (US$190) million to S$270.7 (US$196.7) million (Leong, 2016). Net profits at MBS declined by 12.6% to S$1.51 (US$1.1) billion and revenues, including from the casino, were down 8.1% to S$2.95 (US$2.1) billion (Whang, 2016). Stagnation was expected in 2016 (Wong, 2015) and the first quarter results were disappointing (Lim, 2016), although MBS has a larger market share of around 60% and its central location and premium brand are particular strengths (Leong, 2015c).

Social impacts are not easily quantified (Da Cunha, 2010), but a study suggests that residents are accepting of the IRs and casinos in their midst and many see several benefits (Wu & Chen, 2015). Citizens alongside visitors now have more leisure choices and spaces, several of which are free, and there may be a feeling of
pride that the country can boast of futuristic structures designed by world famous architects. Regarding gambling habits, a 2014 survey found that adult participation was relatively stable between 2011 and 2013 with 47% and 44%, respectively indulging in gambling at least once during the year. Jackpot machines and table games in the casinos accounted for 1% each of all games played, a drop from 2011 when respective shares were 3% and 4%. It was also concluded that the incidence of probable pathological and problem gambling decreased from 2.6% in 2011 to 0.7% in 2014 (National Council on Problem Gambling, 2015). The Totalisator Board reported that 17,000 Singapore citizens and Permanent Residents visited the casinos in 2012 in contrast to 20,000 in 2010 (Tan, 2015). Income from the entry levies was also reduced to S$147 million (US$106) in 2014-2015 from S$170 million (US$125) in 2012-2013 (Singapore Totalisator Board, 2015).

Nevertheless, locals are believed to make up 25% to 30% of all casino visitors (Tan, 2014) and the Economist (“The house wins”, 2014) cites the findings of a consultancy report that Singaporeans incurred the second highest gambling losses per person globally at €680 (US$769) in 2013, half of the total lost in casinos. Exclusions climbed from 2,500 by individuals and 194 by families in late 2010 (Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sport, 2010) to 233,481 and 2,116 in 2015 with a very large number of self-excluding foreign Permanent Residents (National Council on Problem Gambling, 2016). The data can be read as a demonstration of both the efficacy of the protective schemes and proclivity towards compulsive gambling. MBS and RWS profess a commitment to responsible gaming and websites have information about identifying problem behaviour and the formal curbs, advising on how the National Council on Problem Gambling can assist (Marina Bay Sands, 2016c; Resorts World Sentosa, 2016b). Problem gamblers are still a worry because of their lack of self-control (National Council on Problem Gambling, 2015) and a spokesperson for the Samaritans charity which helps people in despair said that telephone callers troubled about gambling debts and loan shark harassment doubled following the casino openings (Tan, 2015).

In terms of criminality, all documented cases fell by 0.1% to 33,152 in 2010 from 2009. Commercial crime encompasses cheating to enter casinos, of which there were 55 instances, and thieving on the premises described as mainly petty and opportunistic. The police registered less illegal moneylending and loan shark activity, partly explained by extra efforts to combat these misdemeanours. Persons charged with casino-related offences, again primarily petty thieving, numbered 112 in 2010 compared with 139 in 2013 which was 75 fewer than in 2012. The general crime rate for 2013 was the lowest in 30 years at 29,984 cases and, despite rising by 7.8% in 2014 and again by 4% in 2015 due mainly to e-commerce cheating (Singapore Police Force, 2015, 2016), the figures make Singapore one of the safest and most law-abiding countries in the world (“Lee Hsien Loong’s”, 2015).
Research about attitudes towards casinos in Macao and Singapore (Wu & Chen, 2015) discloses that perceived environmental consequences can be positive and negative. Among the latter are environmental damage, loss of natural heritage, traffic congestion, overcrowding, litter and other pollution. Survey respondents, however, tended to highlight more favourable outcomes which may reflect how the republic prides itself on being a garden city even after intense urbanisation and industrialisation. Authorities undertake strategic physical and economic planning with strict rules about land use and construction and policies to preserve greenery. It could be argued that the resorts have added interest to the city landscape and are a form of environmental upgrading, especially at Martina Bay which is on reclaimed land. Environmental issues have not been so widely discussed, with the exception of complaints by animal welfare groups about the treatment of dolphins at the RWS marine park. A number of the creatures have died in captivity, prompting adverse publicity and a campaign to release them (Sim, 2013). Nevertheless, both companies claim to be implementing environmentally-friendly measures as part of their dedication to corporate social responsibility (Marina Bay Sands, 2016d; Resorts World Sentosa, 2016c).

Future Directions of Singapore’s IRs and Conclusion

After just over five years, the sustainable success of the IRs as both business entities and tourist attractions has still to be decided. More analyses are required over a longer period of time to allow authoritative conclusions. This paper has shown that there appears to have been the sought-for stimulus to tourist arrivals and expenditure initially, but the effect has diminished. The aforementioned 2015 targets were not attained, visitor numbers falling short by almost two million, although other forces have been in play and isolating the contribution of the IRs is very difficult. Looking ahead, maintaining interest in the resorts as their novelty wears off is a challenge. Refreshment, especially of components besides the casinos, is necessary in order to entice more first-time and repeat visitors. However, there are space restrictions at MBS and RWS which constrain innovation and enlargement of facilities in pursuit of greater non-gambling returns and hotel rooms are limited. Management has to confront intensifying competition due to openings of IRs and casinos across the region so that increasing gambling incomes will also be problematic. Casino revenues already seem to be reaching a plateau and there is uncertainty about future demand from main markets such as China and neighbouring South East Asian countries due to changing domestic policies alongside national and international economic movements.

Dilemmas suggest the shortcomings of IRs such as those of Singapore as a type of tourist amenity. They can be replicated elsewhere and perhaps surpassed in scale and entertainment standard and quality, making any competitive advantage hard to retain. With regard to Singapore, assertions about iconic architectural status are
not entirely convincing and observers may be reminded of comments by Hannigan (2007, p. 972) that casino cities are “encased in a straightjacket of blandness and predictability”. Gotham and Haubert (2007, p. 34) write about how corporate gambling “expresses the emergence of a new global-local connection where the balance of power is shifting from locally-owned entertainment venues and localised consumption patterns towards more standardised patterns of consumption”. Singapore’s IRs may belong to an internationalised and homogenised leisure landscape disconnected from geographical location and eroding the sense of place identity and destination distinctiveness which drive much of tourism.

The story of Singapore and its IRs is still unfolding and merits further study. There are clearly lessons to be learned from its experiences about managing the process of IR development from its inception through to its operation. The government has played a leading role in shaping the character and running of the resorts, imposing conditions in an effort to ensure visitor attractions in conformity with official visions. It has also intervened in attempts to minimise the social costs of casino gambling and criminal abuse, creating legislative and administrative frameworks for that purpose. The ensuing “transparent and effective corporate governance structure” (Chi, 2014, p. 75) and “stringent gaming regulation” (Cohen, 2015, p. 2) have been praised, but there has been speculation that the rigorous junket promoter rules inhibit the government’s capacity to draw lucrative high rollers. This could result in greater attention to and reliance on resident gamblers, contrary to firmly held formal notions of the casinos as tourist products. Preventive measures of banning advertising to this group and fairly modest entry levies could be ineffective deterrents to those determined to gamble.

Finally, it is important to recognise that Singapore’s setting up and regulatory strategies may not be easily transferable to other countries. The city state is distinguished by its compactness, affluence, discipline and efficient government of the People’s Action Party which has been in power since independence. The administration is renowned for its degree of control and planning whereby it exercises considerable influence over private sector operations, public behaviour and the nature and pace of development. Such circumstances are rare, and the need for adaptation of the Singapore model to suit prevailing local contexts must be duly appreciated by developers and governments seeking to emulate attainments. The extent to which it is an exemplar of best practices and the IRs as sustainable core tourist attractions are interesting topics for future researchers as is industry trends across the Asia Pacific region.

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Research Note

Multifaceted Hotel Diversification in Developing Pacific Island Destinations

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Abstract: This research used 25 interviews with hotel operators to explore the strategic practices hotel businesses use to effectively operate in developing Pacific Island destinations. Four islands in the Federated States of Micronesia were used as the research setting, and data were collected and analysed using a grounded theoretical approach. The core conceptual category which emerged to explain and understand the requisite strategic practices for surviving the languid tourism context of these islands is dubbed multifaceted hotel diversification (MHD). The MHD model proposed and discussed is comprised of three conceptual sub-dimensions: guest market diversification, hotel property diversification, and industry diversification. These findings contribute to the extremely scarce body of hotel research in Pacific Island destinations, and as such have implications for entrepreneurs, business development policy and training, and future research in this little understood part of the world.

Keywords: Hotel strategy, multifaceted hotel diversification, Pacific Island countries, tourism


Introduction

Since gaining political independence in the 1970-80s, most Pacific Island countries (PICs) have embarked on a continuous quest to achieve increased economic self-reliance (Hezel, 2012). Given the attractive natural and sociocultural resources that characterise many tropical islands of the Pacific, tourism is thought to be the most conceivable driving force behind increased economic activity in PICs (Pratt & Harrison, 2015). Nevertheless, some PICs have been unable to develop viable tourism industries (Connell, 2007).

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Despite the challenges posed by the languid state of the broader tourism industry, some hotels in these low-performing PICs have continued to provide private sector employment and produce the platform for guest experiences. The strategic practices required to accomplish this have yet to be studied and delineated. This research leverages insights from hotel operators in the Federated States of Micronesia to illuminate a multidimensional model of diversification used to make hotels work amidst the challenges of the broader tourism context. In addition to contributing to the dearth of hotel research in developing PICs, these findings offer a practical alternative to the standardised business paradigms often advocated for, but which may have limited theoretical and practical relevance to these contexts (Solomona & Davis, 2012).

**Literature Review**

While doing business in PICs requires unique strategic practices (Saffu, 2003; Solomona & Davis, 2012), information on what exactly these may be is lacking. For hotel businesses in particular, much of the East Asia-Pacific research has focused on major industrial locations like Hong Kong (Yeung & Lau, 2005), China (Lo, 2012), and Korea (Han, 2012). Despite the fact that there are about 25,000 Pacific Islands in the region (Hailey, 1987), there is almost a total absence of research relating to hotels in PICs. This is a particular problem in that tourism and hospitality have been targeted as the most conceivable driving force behind economic development for many PICs (Hezel, 2012).

Moreover, existing hotel research in East Asia-Pacific is largely positivist in nature, seeking to empirically test models based on existing theories (Lo, 2012; Yeung & Lau, 2005). However, the factors which contribute to business success in developing countries differ from developed countries on account of distinct contextual elements (Benzing, Chu & Kara, 2009). For instance, Western theories may exhibit some naiveté regarding strategy implantation in the “diverse texture of different business systems” where careful consideration of context is important (Olsen & Roper, 1998, p. 117). Thus, the applicability of mainstream management theories to developing countries has been called into question (Kiggundu, Jorgenson & Hafsi, 1983; Saffu, 2003). In PICs, there remains a need for interpretive hotel business research which accounts for the idiosyncratic environments endemic to these islands.

**Methodology**

To investigate the strategic practices hotels use to navigate the challenges of the tourism context in low-performing PICs, 25 interviews were conducted with hotel operators across four island states (i.e. Yap, Chuuk, Pohnpei, and Kosrae) in the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM). The range of subjects’ experience ranged from
roughly 1 to 30 years, and the interviews ranged from 32 to 116 minutes. Classic grounded theory method (Glaser, 1978) was used for the data collection and analysis.

First, open coding was used to develop preliminary understanding of what the data was communicating about the shape and direction of the study, and how data incidents relate to emerging categories (Glaser, 1978). A total of 721 data incidents were examined, which generated 85 open codes. Next, selective coding was used to delimit additional lines of questioning around select groups of open codes deemed increasingly relevant to the emerging theoretical framework, and then consolidate and elevate them to a higher level of conceptual abstraction (Glaser, 1978). This selective coding process was centred around the emergent conceptual importance of diversification. Fostering conceptual elaboration through selective coding elucidated a model of diversification characterised by three conceptual sub-dimensions dubbed Multifaceted Hotel Diversification (MHD). Figure 1 illustrates this analytic process using one of the MHD sub-dimensions as an example, with the double-sided arrows representing the constant comparison of codes (Glaser, 1978). Theoretical coding was then used to integrate the open and selective coding results regarding MHD with the extant literature as part of an organised theoretical framework, which is discussed next.

"You need to be active within your business. We are holding a community tournament here next week. This is a kind of diversification that provides a reason for local people to go out and do something while generating revenue for us."

"We designed the patio area to accommodate guest interaction as well as big community functions."

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Incident</th>
<th>Open Code</th>
<th>Selective Code</th>
<th>Sub-Concept</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low asset specificity</td>
<td>Flexibility of hotel property</td>
<td>Broad use of hotel property can lead to opportunities</td>
<td>Hotel Property Diversification</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 1.** Sample of the coding process using the *Hotel Property Diversification* sub-dimension
Findings

In PICs like the FSM, the conventional strategic prescriptions for hotels have centred around issues like upgrading quality standards to attract lucrative international markets, cultivating a strong regulatory and foreign investment climate, enhancing marketing campaigns, improving infrastructure and service development, and facilitating access to financing (Duncan, Codippily, Duituturaga & Bulatale, 2014; Federated States of Micronesia Development Partners Forum, 2012). The present research suggests such standardised prescriptions often suffer from a lack of practicality and relevance to hotels in developing PICs. Stated differently, there is a disconnect between such externally-legitimated ideals, and the strategic practices that hotel operators must actually use to survive the realities of the bleak tourism context. One such set of practices is characterised by MHD and its three conceptual sub-dimensions: *guest market diversification*, *hotel property diversification*, and *industry diversification*. Figure 2 presents a conceptual model of MHD and these sub-dimensions, and each are briefly discussed next.

**Core Conceptual Category**

![Figure 2. MHD and its three conceptual sub-dimensions](image-url)

**MHD Conceptual Sub-Dimension 1: Guest Market Diversification**

As opposed to previous hotel research in developed East Asia-Pacific destinations (Shen, 2015), the present findings highlight the impracticalities of a focused guest market strategy for hotels in PICs where tourist arrivals are already prohibitively low. Rather, hotels in this context must retain the potential to generate revenue by meeting the requirements and expectations of diverse guest markets.
Hotels in the FSM have typically been advised to segment their market according to high- versus low-spending tourists, eco versus mass tourists, and/or geographical segments (Federated States of Micronesia Economic Summit, 2004). However, the findings suggest that segmenting across rather than within guest types is the most efficacious. Given the languid state of tourism, hotels conceived using idealistic visions about serving consistent waves of international tourists, and thus strategise only within this segment, will face immense challenges. As one subject stated:

*My idea was to build a cottage-style hotel for tourists. I submitted my loan application and opened the first units two years later. When I opened the hotel, I said “Well, where are the guests?” Nobody knew. And we have been struggling ever since.*

To illustrate, business travellers comprise roughly 50% of the total market for the FSM hotels that have the ability to serve this market in addition to international tourists. Previous studies have shown the hotel attribute preference differences between business travellers and tourists (McCleary, Weaver & Hutchinson, 1993; Yavas & Babakus, 2005). Thus, despite one’s idealistic visions about operating a Pacific Island tourist hotel, the ability to accommodate the needs of diverse guest markets must be present in order to survive. In highlighting this need for guest market dexterity, one subject stated:

*I originally wanted to build a bungalow-style hotel for tourists, but realised I had to change my strategy. In the end, the tourism situation is such that the only thing that has kept the business going is the business travellers.*

Thus, as opposed to the standardised prescriptions about segmenting only within the international tourist market, hotels must create multifaceted revenue streams by also operating across segments.

**MHD Conceptual Sub-Dimension 2: Hotel Property Diversification**

Even for hotels which can effectively serve diverse markets, the reality of the tourism context in low-performing PICs is such that maintaining a consistent stream of guests is not practical. Thus, hotels must also be able to utilise their property in a variety of ways outside of the principle function of accommodating guests. In other words, the hotel must be conceptualised as an asset that can be deployed for multiple uses, an attribute referred to in the literature as “low asset specificity” (Williamson, 1985). As one subject stated:
Out here you have to view your hotel facility as an asset that needs to be used in as many ways as possible, and you must design the property to facilitate multiple uses.

For instance, previous research has highlighted the potential tension between Pacific Island hotel operations and sociocultural norms and practices (Binder & Varga, 2015). However, socialisation processes are a constant of Micronesian societies (Hezel, 2013), and hotels are not exempt from these. Accordingly, an innovative operational strategy used by some FSM hotels is to embrace the prevailing socialisation norms while simultaneously drawing in much needed business from the surrounding community through the use of flexible spaces. As one hotel owner stated:

For the people and communities in the FSM, it’s all about socialisation. If you look at the way our hotel here is designed, it’s designed to accommodate not only guests but socialisation and functions for people in the community… This did not happen by accident, and the hotel has benefitted from it.

Thus, embracing and planning for (rather than excluding and ignoring) sociocultural and community considerations as a potential revenue stream by conceptualising the property as a multi-use asset is a viable approach for supplementing the core accommodation function of hotels in low-performing PICs.

**MHD Conceptual Sub-Dimension 3: Industry Diversification**

Previous East Asia-Pacific research (Yeung & Lau, 2005) uses mainstream management theory to examine the competitive actions of firms within the hotel industry. In contrast, the present findings highlight the importance of taking competitive actions across industries to remain viable. For hotels in low-performing PICs, diversification into other industries has distinct advantages. First, potential investors may be reluctant to invest in new enterprises given the challenging institutional context where courts enforce the terms of contractual business arrangements inconsistently (Prasad, 2008). As such, established hotel operators in PICs have an advantage in across-industry diversification through an ability to utilise their experience in navigating the institutional context to partner with potential investors into other industries.

This ability to generate revenue via across-industry diversification can then enable the use of internally-generated capital to improve their existing hotel business, or further diversify into new industries. As one diversified subject explained:
When you get ahead a little bit, always be looking around where you reinvest without hurting yourself too much. But use some to reinvest and start getting revenue from that and then keep that cycle going. We only started the hotel because we slowly but surely established other businesses and had enough money to look for a new venture to invest in.

As Croes (2006) pointed out, an island’s brand is dependent upon the cumulative actions of its tourism-related businesses. Thus, the cumulative effect of this cyclical process of reinvestment can have broader effects by enhancing the tangible and intangible service dimensions of the hotel, thereby impacting guest satisfaction and positive word of mouth for the destination as a whole.

Some examples of successful across-industry diversification for hotels in the FSM included retail, propane distribution, construction, recycling, bars, cafes, baked goods production, nano-breweries, agriculture, handicraft production, ice sales, shipping services, professional services, and others. While many subjects commented on the advantages of this approach given the languid state of tourism in the FSM, all emphasised the importance of a deliberate approach to across-industry diversification. As one subject stated:

Out here it is extremely important that you don’t get too big and into so many things that your businesses get away from you. It takes incredible attention to make a good business out here, and you have to keep your hand on things. You go too big too fast, and you won’t last.

Conclusion

By gleaning insights from hotel practitioners using a grounded theoretical approach, this research suggests that sound strategic practice for hotels in low-performing PICs entails taking on a broad range of functions and markets. More specifically, these findings regarding MHD highlight the importance of segmenting across rather than within guest types, conceptualising the hotel property as a multi-use asset that can be deployed in a variety of ways, and taking competitive action across industries to survive.

Given the dearth of hotel research in PICs combined with the importance of this industry to the economic future of these islands, these findings represent an actionable conceptual framework for use by current and/or future hotel entrepreneurs. Business development organisations in PICs can also use the findings regarding MHD in their small business training modules or when providing technical advice. Doing so can help bridge the gap between the standardised information often peddled to entrepreneurs/investors, and the strategic practices actually needed to survive when doing business in PICs (Cheshire, 2010).
For research, these findings contribute to the need for endemic knowledge on strategic business practices in PICs (Saffu, 2003; Solomona & Davis, 2012). The MHD framework also highlights issues to be expanded upon in future studies. One opportunity is in-depth investigations into other win-win strategic practices which successfully navigate the intersection of business and society in PICs. Another is how diverse management frameworks which integrate a mix of local and Western knowledge are effectively applied to various operational functions of hotels in PICs (e.g. human resources). Finally, to address the more general need for hotel research in developing countries (Köseoglu, Topaloglu, Parnell, & Lester, 2013), additional studies can examine how the MHD model applies to hotels in other island destinations in East Asia-Pacific and beyond.

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References


Research Note

Asians’ Perspectives in Motivation and Network Hospitality

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**Abstract:** The advanced technologies today have enabled the rise of network hospitality (NH) in the tourism and hospitality industry. It is an emerging trend in tourism because society today demands mobility, personalisation and is always seeking for new travel experiences. NH platforms such as Airbnb allow its users to connect with each other in an online and offline setting, sharing private and personal spaces with strangers. This trend is picking up fast in East Asia even though it was introduced in the West. To understand this phenomenon, it is important to know why people engage in this type of hospitality exchange. However, the existing literature of NH overlooked motivation especially Asians’ motivation to participate in NH. By using a systematic review of literature on NH based on a five years’ time interval, this paper aims to highlight the existing gaps of knowledge arriving from the notion of motivation in the context of East Asians and NH. This paper further suggests an analysis of the different components of motivation, perspectives and platforms.

**Keywords:** Network hospitality, sharing economy, motivation, tourist behaviour, Asian.


**Introduction**

Network hospitality (NH) is defined as an online network that connects people through online and offline settings and the exchange of accommodation (Molz, 2011). It represents the contemporary social life in general because of its hybrid and “on the move” concept (Molz, 2011). Similar terms that describe this phenomenon are “sharing economy” and “collaborative consumption”. The concept of sharing economy is built from the idea of “access to” instead of “ownership of” physical and human possessions such as skills and space (Botsman & Rogers, 2010).
Collaborative consumption has a similar meaning, which is to get, to offer or to share access to goods and services by networking through an online community (Botsman & Rogers, 2010). It is expected to assist in reducing social issues such as hyper-consumption, pollution and poverty because it can lessen the cost of economic organisation within communities (Hamari, Sjöklint, & Ukkonen, 2015).

NH platforms can be divided into three types: free (Couchsurfing, BeWelcome, Global Freeloaders, and Hospitality Club), reciprocal (HomeExchange, Staydu, My Twin Place, and Home Link), and rental (Airbnb, HomeAway, and 9flats) (Voytenko, Mont, & Zvolska, 2016). The most popular and established NH platforms are Airbnb and Couchsurfing (Ikkala & Lampinen, 2015).

Airbnb is a global online-based hospitality exchange and social networking platform where anyone can register to be a member and offer or find accommodation to rent. One can be a host or a guest. It involves monetary transactions and its prices depend on the area and type of accommodation offered. By using a systematic review of the past five years’ literature on NH, this paper will highlight the gaps of knowledge of motivation in the context of East Asians. Airbnb will be used as an example of a NH platform to elaborate the phenomenon because of its success in Asia (Yeo, 2016).

Literature Review

Network Hospitality

NH is a growing phenomenon in the tourism and hospitality industry. Since NH experience is a highly individualised and personalised experience, the power lies between the host and guest to cater to their own preferences. This is an advantage of NH in the industry because it offers NH users personalisation, which means it values individuality. Not every traveller’s wants and needs are the same. It is possible for this concept to be a niche in the tourism and hospitality industry (Stors & Kagermeier, 2015).

Overall, it is a fresh concept that combines two different major aspects. The synergy between tourism and technology offers a product that fits in perfectly in today’s modern society. Today, people, objects and information are always “on the move” (Pellegrino, 2011). NH offers a relevant concept where tourism experience can be achieved while being always on the move. In fact, most of the NH platforms have their own versions of mobile applications. In this sense, it is a demand granted where users can easily enjoy NH experience anytime and anywhere in the world.

NH definitely challenges the way traditional tourism and hospitality works. Undoubtedly, technology impacts the way individuals travel today. The characteristics that NH possess, underline and suggest the future of the tourism and hospitality industry. Technology is heavily involved in modern society’s daily life. It is almost impossible that the evolution of the tourism and hospitality industry will not depend on technology. In fact, technology is the key ingredient for this industry to advance.
By looking into the phenomenon of NH, there are many issues (motivation, trust, and impact) and aspects (host/guest perspectives and different platforms) that can be dissected to learn, to investigate, to gauge, to understand and to conclude what it takes to elevate the industry. The implication is that NH might possess the foundation to better the industry and researchers should give priority to this phenomenon.

Motivation is the core aspect to understanding human behaviour (Graham & Weiner, 1996). In this case, it is why individuals have chosen to participate in NH. Different aspects of NH such as behaviour, impact, and experience exist only because people have simply decided to engage in NH. As a matter of fact, motivation is claimed to be accountable for the reason people choose to do something, how willing and determined they are to pursue what they want (Dörnyei, 2001).

**Motivation**

It was suggested that the founder of Couchsurfing, Casey Fenton might have laid out the motivational factors of NH. Before Fenton travelled to Iceland, he sent emails to 1500 students, who were strangers to him to seek for accommodation. His motives were to reduce his travelling costs, especially accommodation and to try something new, particularly to travel with locals.

Stors and Kagermeier (2015) proposed that people who join the shared economy are explorer tourists seeking for authentic experiences of the unusual form of tourism. They studied motivation from guests’ perspectives using Airbnb and Couchsurfing in Berlin. The main motivational factors found are: to save money, have direct contact with locals, get perspective of the inhabitants, meet new people and get insider tips from host. The guests’ motivation varies from the hosts’ motivation, but for both hosts and guests, the primary motivation is personal contact. Similarly, Finley (2013) found that Airbnb users are motivated by a practical theme (value for money and flexibility) and a non-practical theme (cultural experience).

It is important to realise that in the past five years, there have been limited studies on the motivational aspect of NH (Pietilä, 2011; Liedtke, 2011; Liu, 2012; Finley, 2013; Hamari et al., 2015; Ikkala & Lampinen, 2015; Kim, Yoon, & Zo, 2015; Stors & Kagermeier, 2015; Zaki, 2015; Lampinen & Cheshire, 2016). These studies can be further divided into different components such as information technology (Hamari et al., 2015) and behaviour (Pietilä, 2011; Liedtke, 2011; Liu, 2012; Ikkala & Lampinen, 2015; Kim et al., 2015; Stors & Kagermeier, 2015; Zaki, 2015), different perspectives such as host (Pietilä, 2011; Ikkala & Lampinen, 2015; Lampinen & Cheshire, 2016) and guest (Stors & Kagermeier, 2015) and different platforms such as Couchsurfing (Pietilä, 2011; Liedtke, 2011; Zaki, 2015; Stors & Kagermeier, 2015) and Airbnb (Finley, 2013; Ikkala & Lampinen, 2015; Kim et al., 2015; Stors & Kagermeier, 2015; Lampinen & Cheshire, 2016).
Under closer inspection, there are actually many gaps. Instead of generalising the motivation of NH users, researchers can look into specific components of motivation (intrinsic and extrinsic motivations), different perspectives (host and guest) and different type of platforms (free, reciprocal and rental). There are different types of NH platforms because some involve monetary transactions, some do not and some involve reciprocity. For instance, Airbnb involves monetary transactions but Couchsurfing does not.

Another key point is that the task to study motivation in NH is undertaken by undergraduate students (Pietilä, 2011; Liedtke, 2011; Zaki, 2015). This shows that there is an initiation to contribute knowledge back to the notion of motivation. However, these studies are only published and listed in the university’s website (Pietilä, 2011; Liedtke, 2011; Zaki, 2015). It is common knowledge that researchers build their studies based on references. When these studies do not draw enough citations, they will be neglected and left unexplored (Figueroa-Domecq, Pritchard, Segovia-Pèrez, Morgan, & Villacè-Molinero, 2015).

At the same time, most of the existing literature is based on Western experiences. The point often overlooked here is the neglect of Asians’ experiences (Chen, 2011). NH platforms envision themselves as a global community with diverse culture, constantly fostering cross-cultural interactions (Chen, 2011). However, the existing literature does not reflect this aspect at all. Asians’ perspectives and experiences are often neglected, which does not align with the core value of NH.

Notably, there is one motivational study of NH that is not based on a Western perspective. Yang and Ahn (2016) found out that enjoyment and reputation are the motivational factors on South Koreans’ positive behaviour towards Airbnb. Contrary to the findings of Hamari et al. (2015), it was found that sustainability and economic gains were not motivational factors in South Korea. This study indicates that there are differences between what motivates Western and Asian NH users. In other words, findings in the West may not be applicable in an Asian context.

**The Growth of Asians in Network Hospitality**

While it is well known that NH experiences were only introduced and commonly practiced in Western countries, it is surprising to find that Asians are beginning to participate in NH. In this context, Airbnb is used as an example to indicate the growth of East Asian participation in NH. Airbnb’s website covers most of the East Asian countries. The concept of NH is even more fresh and original in Asia. At the same time, the consumption of NH experiences in Asian countries is showing remarkable growth (Beaton, 2010; Yeo, 2016). In fact, the growth was so rapid that Airbnb is considered as one of the driving forces for economic growth (Lee, 2015; Yeo, 2016; Yang & Ahn, 2016), and tourism (Lee, 2015; Yeo, 2016) to the extent that it was considered a disruptive innovator of the digital age to businesses (Faris, 2016; Tan, 2016).
The number of East Asian Airbnb users is increasing especially among South Koreans, Singaporeans and Malaysians. The South Korean government recently declared sharing economy as one of the new driving factors for industrial growth (Yang & Ahn, 2016). Under the hospitality segment, Airbnb was named as one of the main examples (Yang & Ahn, 2016). Before the declaration, sharing accommodation was actually prohibited in South Korea. The rapid growth of NH phenomenon has led Yang and Ahn (2016) to undertake the study of South Koreans’ motivation towards sharing economy, particularly Airbnb.

Likewise, in Singapore, Airbnb has been recognised as one of the ways to promote and support Singapore as a tourism destination and to increase economic growth (Lee, 2015; Yeo, 2016). It was remarked that Airbnb offers cheaper options in accommodation which helped to grow the economy because guests generally spend more when they stay longer. Airbnb in Singapore is the second largest source of outbound and inbound travellers in Asia; Airbnb Japan takes the lead (Lee, 2015).

In Malaysia, the growth of Airbnb is rapid and successful to the extent it was named as a disruptive innovator of digital age to the businesses in Malaysia (Faris, 2016). Airbnb was reported to be affecting the hotel industry (Tan, 2016). It was named as one of the competitors of hotels in Penang (Tan, 2016). It is of no doubt that Airbnb has grown very rapidly in East Asian countries. This also emphasises Asians in NH is increasing.

**Conclusion**

The phenomenon of NH in Asia definitely requires researchers’ attention. First, the existing literature on overall NH is limited. This phenomenon is an emerging trend and to understand why individuals participate in NH, motivation should be emphasised. Second, motivation studies in NH are lacking. According to Pearce (1996), tourists’ motivation studies play an active and important role in the overall analysis of tourism. Despite motivation being one of the most researched topics in the field of tourism (Pearce & Lee, 2005), there is still a gap in the literature with regard to motivation in the context of NH. The components of motivation can be further divided into different parts of motivation, the perspectives of host/guest and the different NH platforms.

Third, despite the facts given to prove that NH is growing in East Asian countries, Asians’ perspectives are neglected. Asians make up a significant portion of the market. Notably, Yang and Ahn (2016) did a study on South Koreans’ motivation to engage in NH, particularly Airbnb. Overall, NH, motivation and Asians’ perspectives are very limited. This shows that there is a lot of potential in terms of contributing knowledge back to the tourism and hospitality industry.
Future Research

It is suggested that future researchers could analyse different parts of motivation in NH. Motivation could be studied from the perspectives of host or guest and even based on different platforms such as Couchsurfing or Airbnb. Moreover, researchers could also do a segmentation of NH users such as the strongly proposed Asians’ perspective. The world is diverse with culture and ethnicity. It can be further divided into gender (men and women), ethnicity (Western, Asian, Middle Eastern and African), or generation (Baby Boomers, X, Y and Z). It could also be interesting if future researchers analyse the differences of the suggested components.

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- Establishing a network of Tourism research clusters in ASEAN Universities.
- Developing links between ASEAN researchers in tourism with common projects.
- Providing a recognized multi-site resource and expertise related to ASEAN Tourism.
- Contributing to the development of the Tourism Human capacity for ASEAN Countries.
- Supporting the ASEAN integration policies.

Objectives

1. Establishing a network of Tourism research clusters in ASEAN Universities.
2. Developing links between ASEAN researchers in tourism with common projects.
3. Providing a recognized multi-site resource and expertise related to ASEAN Tourism.
4. Contributing to the development of the Tourism Human capacity for ASEAN Countries.
5. Supporting the ASEAN integration policies.

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